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ABSTRACT

Issues concerning the enrollment of adults in degree programs in countries belonging to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development are considered. Of concern are policies and institutional practices that affect adult participation in degree studies. The growing importance of continuing academic and professional education is addressed, along with the impact of new information and telecommunication technologies and their importance for distance higher education and independent study. In addition to an overview of adult demand for education and training and the role of higher education, attention is directed to: participation rates of adult students; characteristics of adult students; organizational policies and practices (e.g., admissions, part-time and distance modes and methods of study, credit transfer); and financial support to institutions and students. Comprehensive country surveys were completed by a number of countries (including Austria, Canada, France, West Germany, Ireland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States), while partial information was obtained from Australia, Finland, and Japan. (SW)

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# ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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*The main objectives of the Centre are as follows:*

- *to promote and support the development of research activities in education and undertake such research activities where appropriate;*
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One of the important trends identified by the Intergovernmental Conference on Policies for Higher Education in October 1981 was the increasing participation of adult students in education -- indeed, in many countries they already represented, quantitatively, the main source of vigorous growth of overall higher education enrolments. But to identify a trend as one of the growing pressures besetting the universities (in what came to be called the "Crisis of Confidence Conference") was at once to question if the response on the part of the higher education system was (or was going to be) commensurate with the weight and protean nature of this demand.

The answer would, of course, vary as between countries, but a number of those participating agreed subsequently that a co-ordinated survey of the position in each of them, followed by a centrally prepared synthesis would be most timely and a valuable means for the interchange of experience in a matter of real moment. To effect this "The participation of adult students in higher education" was adopted as one of the main topics in CERI's Programme of Work 1982-86.

The purview was broken down into three areas for detailed investigation:

-- Financial and organisational policies for participation of adults in higher education;

-- The role of institutions in continuing (further) education;

-- Innovation in non-traditional (and non-campus-based) higher education: the impact of new technologies.

For each of these areas participating countries contributed national reports or case studies, effecting coverage of Australia, Austria, Canada, England and Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Sweden and the United States. There were, too, meetings of experts -- on the role of Higher Education Institutions in Klagenfurt, Austria, on distance higher education in Heerlen, Netherlands, and on the impact of the new technologies in Boston and New York City. Such a response illustrates how seriously Member countries are addressing this relatively new demographic, social, economic, educational and, above all, human problem.

The Secretariat's task, entrusted to the direction of Dr. Hans G. Schütze, has been to organise this multinational enquiry, to co-ordinate its operation and now, in this volume, to present a synthesis of its results.

This report is published on the responsibility of the Secretary General of OECD. The views expressed therein do not necessarily represent those, either of OECD or its Member governments.

J.R. Gass
Director, Centre for Educational
Research and Innovation

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# INTRODUCTION

## Purview

The generation and dissemination of knowledge have been and continue to be the central tasks of universities and equivalent institutions of higher education. Traditionally, the task of dissemination has been discharged by imparting knowledge by classroom-teaching, mainly through full-time courses, to a selected group of young people aged between 18 and say 25. This pattern is now undergoing gradual, yet radical, change owing to a number of forceful socio-economic developments. Thus, while classroom teaching, full-time courses and traditional age students may still be the dominant pattern in higher education, off-campus provision and independent learning, part-time study and adult students are clearly on the increase.

Although in the past adults were only infrequently accepted as students in higher education, today they are a veritable "new group" in universities and other institutions of higher education and of growing importance and policy concern in many of the OECD countries. Previously, even in the few institutions having a tradition of academic provision for adults, adult participation was -- with the exception of the post-war years, when many former servicemen took up their studies which were deferred by the war -- always marginal, limited to non-degree studies through short courses administered by extra-mural or external departments. But now adult participation has transgressed the boundaries of non-degree, extra-mural studies and is moving from the margin into the centre of the universities' mission. Thus, adults are not merely another new minority group but, both in terms of number and importance, they are already, or soon will be in other countries, a major part of the higher education population.

However important the non-traditional age group has become in terms of demand for higher education, real or potential, relatively little is known about this new clientele. Likewise, although there is a wide variety of responses to this demand, both on the part of institutions and policy-makers, little coherent information is available about the essential issues underlying adult participation. What are the educational needs of adults? What is their preferred mode of study? How do adults learn? How do they learn best? What are the principal factors that motivate adults to return to, or enrol for the first time in, higher education? What are the main barriers they face? What policies and what institutional practices enhance adult participation and, conversely, which ones present obstacles that adults cannot, at least not easily, overcome? What are the actual characteristics of the adults who do enrol, as compared to those of identified target groups (in cases where explicit policies designed to promote adult education do exist)? What is the impact, if any, of higher education studies on the professional career and personal development of those who have participated?

Not all of these questions can be explored here in a thorough and systematic way. This restriction is not only due to limited time and resources, and to the great variety both of higher education systems and of approaches towards non-traditional students, but also to a lack of a reliable statistical data base that would permit us to give definite answers or provide well-founded cross-country comparisons. This report will therefore concentrate on three main themes.

The first of these is devoted to the situation of adults who enrol in degree awarding programmes. Chapters I and II will describe and examine those policies and institutional practices that either enhance, are indifferent to, or conversely tend to impede adult participation in degree studies. Obviously, there are a great number of such factors bearing both upon adults' motivation and their concrete possibilities to pursue degree studies. The availability or lack of appropriate information and counselling services, of part-time attendance options, of distance methods of study as well as the openness or, conversely, the rigidity of admission rules are among the most important of such factors. Of equal relevance are financial support schemes that would permit adults who normally have greater family and financial commitments than younger students to concentrate on their studies without being obliged to work full-time for their living. As is the case with admission rules, attendance options, the contents of courses offered, and student support schemes are often designed for traditional age students and are therefore either not applicable to, or not adequate for, adults. These issues will be discussed in Chapter II of this report.

While only a minority of adults in higher education study towards a full degree, the majority are enrolled in some form of continuing (or further) education programmes. Such programmes are mostly offered by special departments (i.e. adult education, extra-mural or university extension departments) ranging from very short courses to more substantial programmes while, in some settings, they are partly identical with degree courses. The subjects of these courses vary enormously, thus reflecting the great diversity of adult demand, i.e. the many fields of interest and the different purposes for which adults enroll, ranging from personal enrichment and development to professional career advancement.

In some OECD countries, continuing education for adults has a long-standing tradition, for instance in the United Kingdom and in the United States where university extension initiatives date back to the 19th century. Elsewhere, as in the Nordic and German-speaking countries for example, the task of providing education for adults has been primarily assumed up to now by a non-academic adult education sector. But increasingly in these countries, universities and other higher education institutions are beginning to accommodate adults, thus competing with the traditional adult education sector and other providers, such as employers, unions or professional associations. Although of the same tradition of a well-established adult education sector outside higher education, Sweden is most advanced in that it has opened widely the gates of universities to adults.

Continuing education through universities and other higher education institutions is a fast growing sector and, in some countries (such as the United States) where demand from the traditional age groups is decreasing due to demographic developments, it constitutes the only growth sector in higher education. Increasingly therefore, institutions regard adults as an important clientele that will make up for falling enrolment figures and ensure their viability and survival. As a consequence, more institutions are ready to make changes both with regard to contents and modes of delivery in order to render programmes more suitable and hence more attractive for adult students. In other countries, e.g. in France or in Germany, where higher education is less market-oriented and rather regulated by laws or administrative rules, it is by virtue of such instruments or through the allocation of public funds specifically earmarked for continuing education that institutions are required or encouraged to open their doors more widely to adults seeking continuing education.

Thus, the second central theme taken up in this report is the growing importance of continuing academic and professional education which is becoming one of the main missions of higher education on an equal footing with the two principal missions it is traditionally assigned, the generation and the dissemination of research, and the initial education and training of the young academic elite. The reasons for this development as well as its impact on the organisation, methodology, and contents of higher education will be discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

The third theme that will be discussed with respect to adult participation is the impact of new information and telecommunication technologies and their importance for distance higher education and independent study. Most prominently among the more recent innovations in this field figure the Open University in the United Kingdom and its various emulations which mark one of the most successful departures from traditional campus-based face-to-face tuition. The importance of distance higher education and of self-directed learning can hardly be over-rated with respect to adult participation. It is safe to predict that it will further increase as new technologies -- micro-computer, cable television, video disc, video text, satellites -- are developed and become more generally accessible, thus lowering, or doing away with, barriers of distance and time which have hitherto been among the major obstacles to greater participation by adults. Just as continuing education will be added to the principal missions of higher education, new technologies will have a profound impact on higher education provision and learning, and it can be expected that this transformation of the way in which academic knowledge is disseminated and acquired will not be limited to adult students but will gradually become a new and widespread, if not dominant, pattern of higher teaching and learning in the future.

To predict this development is not to hail the new technologies as instruments for eliminating all barriers to adult participation. On the contrary, there is a concern that while some of the traditional hurdles are being lowered, new ones materialise which may prove just as difficult for many to overcome. While some adults are prepared and able to study by themselves, others are not, and this further increases existing inequalities within the adult groups. In particular, must it be expected that so-called disadvantaged adults will fall further behind while the relatively young and well-educated will be able to gain perhaps greater advantage? To what extent is adult learning social learning, i.e. must individual learning at a distance be complemented by learning through tutorials either on a one-to-one basis (e.g. by telephone) or in a group classroom situation? Which technologies or what combination of technologies are in particular suited to adult learning? These issues will be explored in more detail in Chapter IV.

## Method and Definitions

As systematic and reliable data and information about adults in higher education are hard to come by, Member countries, or independent researchers there, were invited to collect such information as was available from all relevant sources. For this data to be sufficiently comparable, a survey document was elaborated which laid down a number of definitions and specified the data requested. Comprehensive country surveys were completed by a number of countries (including Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States), while reports were received from others that covered only parts of the information sought (Australia, Finland, Japan) (1).

It seemed relatively easy at first to define what was meant by "adult" or "mature" students. Although, legally speaking, almost all students enrolled in higher education are adults, it was obvious that the scope of this study must be limited to those who are older than the traditional group, i.e. those who enrol in direct continuation of upper secondary schools. In order to make clear that the focus is on those who have been out of formal education for a substantial amount of time and hence had some years of labour force experience (including apprenticeship training or military service) or, in the case of women, in raising their children, the age of 25 years was adopted as a meaningful and representative proxy. Thus, data were to refer to those aged 25 years or older in the case of degree students beginning their higher education; but it was made clear that this should not rule out those who had a short spell of higher education before but dropped out and took their studies up again after this age -- provided that a substantial time had elapsed since that initial spell of enrolment.

As will be seen from the discussion below, using age as a criterion was problematic regarding country systems where either no specific statistical category exists with respect to adult students or where the qualifying age is fixed at different levels (e.g. in the United Kingdom where students are "mature" at age 21 for the purpose of having access to the Open University but need to be 23 or older to be eligible for mature student grants). Although, therefore, inadequate for any genuine quantitative comparative analysis, the information base thus obtained was useful with respect to both recent developments and trends concerning adult enrolment and in identifying policies and practices that tend to enhance or, conversely, hinder "adult" enrolment.

The second definition to be provided was that of "higher education" -- equally, if not even more, difficult to circumscribe, as post-secondary provision in Member countries is highly diverse, and it is often difficult to distinguish between higher education and other forms of post-secondary education. In addition, there is the difficulty that any international comparison concerning adult participation would be distorted if the focus were exclusively on higher education, since in many countries it is traditional adult education institutions that provide the kind of courses and programmes which in countries without such a tradition are offered by higher education institutions.

The view taken in this report is that higher education, whatever its exact definition in the different countries, is a sector with a distinct function within the post-secondary sector. In all countries, whatever the prevailing definition, universities and equivalent higher education institutions are ascribed a special role in the educational system as compared to non-academic further or adult education. It is the adult student in the former kind of institutions on whom the present study is focussed, although other forms of provision for adult learning and their respective importance will have to be taken into account when assessing policies and practice with respect to adult participation in higher education. Thus, the notion of higher education adopted here includes universities and equivalent institutions which provide formal higher education courses and which are entitled to award academic or state degrees, certificates or diplomas.

The reason for this selective focus is twofold. First, while in the past adult students were absent from, or at best marginal, in universities and equivalent academic institutions, higher education of adults is becoming increasingly important and in fact, as stated above, constitutes a new central mission of higher education. Secondly, it seemed of especial interest to see how higher education institutions in particular respond to and try to generate demand from adults. These are, of course, institutions whose main features have been tailored for centuries to accommodate the young elite, be this in terms of access, definition of contents, pedagogy and methodology, social activities and context, or of rewards and certificates that were designed for new entrants in the labour market. Which of these established rules had (will have) to be changed to meet the special situation of adult students? How have new provisions concerning or facilitating adult participation affected the way traditional age students are admitted to higher education and taught, the way the contents of academic courses and programmes are defined, or the pattern in which studies are pursued? Thus, the focus of the study is a double one, i.e. on adults participating in higher education, and on developments and innovations in the higher education field as a prerequisite and consequence of adult participation.

Probably the most difficult term to define was "participation". Adults participate in a great variety of educational programmes provided by universities and other academic institutions. These range from full-time or part-time degree courses to shorter programmes not aimed at a full academic qualification which can last anywhere between one or two years and a single evening or weekend. In a way, all of these degree and non-degree courses of shorter duration can be summarised under the term of "continuing education" as they all constitute an organised form of education which is renewed after an interval following the end of initial education. This wide definition is indeed adopted in some recent national policy papers, e.g. the 1984 report by the Continuing Education Working Party of the United Kingdom University Grants Committee.

However, for the purpose of the present study, this wide definition seemed inadequate as the situation of adult degree students is quite different from that of non-degree students and requires therefore different policy and institutional responses. Thus, for example, admission and finance, credit transfer, modular courses and distance provision, the availability of transport and child care facilities, or of adequate counselling, guidance and placement services, are of far greater importance for degree students than for students enrolled in short-term courses since the former will have to devote at least three or four years to full-time study, or even substantially longer in the case of part-time attendance.

Therefore, the present study makes the distinction between these two principal forms of participation and relevant information is presented and issues discussed in separate Chapters (II and III). One, of course, has to be aware that in some cases the borderline is blurred. Thus, for example, under the Swedish higher education system, short courses can lead to a degree but can also be taken for continuing education purposes (in the meaning adopted here). The same is true in some institutions in the United States where degree and non-degree courses are identical and where the difference consists in sitting the exam or not (and, very often, paying a substantially higher fee in the case of taking the course for credit).

To make such a distinction is not to say that the separation between the organisation of degree and of non-degree studies in most systems and institutions is always based on logic or necessity. On the contrary, with the growing importance of continuing (non-degree) higher education, the increasing acceptance of the pattern of part-time studies in alternation with part-time work and the extended use of off-campus provision in combination with self study both at home and at the workplace, it is likely that the prevailing distinction will become less important if not obsolete. For the time being, however, the distinction made here reflects the reality of present higher education policies and the practice pursued in the majority of Member countries and is therefore deemed useful for the purpose of this report.

## NOTE

1. The respective authors of these country surveys were: Dr. E. Hackl of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research; Mr. B. Milligan, Assistant Secretary at the Australian Department of Education and Youth Affairs, assisted by Mr. B. Brennan and Dr. G. Caldwell, Centre for Continuing Education of the Australian National University; Professor P. Paquet of the Faculty of Continuing Education, University of Montreal; Ms. Maria Slowey, Senior Lecturer at Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic; Mr. M. Korhonen of the Finnish Ministry of Education; Mr. J.F. Cervel of the French Ministry of Education; Professor D. Timmermann of the University of Bielefeld; Professor Liam Carey of St. Patrick's College at Maynooth and Ms. Maria Slowey, the author of the British report and a former staff member of St. Patrick's College; Professor M. Yano of the Research Institute for Higher Education at Hiroshima University; Dr. K. Abrahamsson of the Swedish National Board of Education; Dr. A. Wagner of the School of Education at the State University of New York at Albany.

Some of these surveys have been published separately. They include:

- -- The reports for England and Wales, Canada and the United States (edited by H.G. Schütze, Stockholm, Almquist and Wicksell, 1986);
- -- The Swedish Survey (likewise published by Almquist and Wicksell, 1986); and
- -- The Japanese report [in J. Klingler/P. Posch (eds.), Studierende mit Berufserfahrung (Students with Work Experience -- A Challenge to the Universities), Vienna, Böhlau, 1986].

## Chapter I

## ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

Adults in higher education are not just another "non-traditional" group among others in higher education although they have been, and sometimes still are, marginal in terms of numbers and hence importance to policy makers and institutions. Rather, their advent at the gates of the holy grail, formerly reserved exclusively to the young and the academically bright constitutes a major social phenomenon which is an expression of a fundamental change of attitude, not only with respect to knowledge and learning but also the intrinsic interrelatedness of these to work and social life. Increasingly, learning is no longer conceived as an activity limited to a person's youth but spread out over his/her lifetime and pursued either in alternation or in combination with (part-time) work and other social activities such as raising a family. This attitude is caused or re-inforced by the recognition that learning in one's youth is not a sufficient preparation for adult life but that lifelong learning is both a necessity to keep one's professional skills updated with respect to the fast moving body of knowledge prerequisite to competency and hence employability, and a right to personal development and fulfilment outside working life.

In spite of this tendency towards lifelong learning and recurrent education and training, adult demand for education, and in particular for higher education, is difficult to estimate. This is partly due to a number of barriers which prevent adults from manifesting their wish to participate, but also to the fact that in a number of Member countries adult interest in continuing education is absorbed by an established system of non-academic providers whose programmes are specifically tailored to adult needs both with respect to the contents of those programmes and the mode in which they are delivered. Among the objective obstacles that adults face, in particular when they wish to enter higher education, there figure prominently academic entry requirements, the problems of available time for studying and of distance, and financial support. Although some of these seem to lose their relative importance through the development and increasing accessibility of new technologies and media, there are others which might be just as hindering as the ones mentioned and which have not been removed or lowered but, on the contrary, reinforced by the new technologies.

Before discussion of the organisational policies and practices and issues of finance as they prevail in the Member countries (see Chapter II), some contextual factors and underlying issues need to be examined in a more abstract fashion.

## 1. ADULT DEMAND FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Adult demand is highly diverse stemming as it does from a variety of sources ranging from vocational purposes of different kinds to general educational and cultural pursuits. A number of socio-economic factors that are important in creating or advancing this demand need briefly to be mentioned.

### Structural change

The most significant of these in terms of its qualitative impact is the ongoing structural change which is taking place in Member countries, profoundly transforming virtually all sectors of economic activity and occupations. While a great number of jobs have disappeared and others have been newly created, the remaining workplaces are undergoing important changes as well. The development and introduction on a large scale of a new generation of production, office and communication technology is one important factor of their transformation. Microcomputers, numerically controlled machines, industrial robots, computer-aided design and manufacturing (CAD/CAM) and other high technology equipment and processes have had a substantial impact on the content of jobs and work organisation as well as professional skills requirements.

It is generally assumed that as technology becomes increasingly complex and sophisticated the economy will require more highly skilled people in order to operate these machine systems and put them to their most productive use. Even most of those who tend to disagree -- asserting that many of the skilled jobs currently requiring thorough training and experience will be reduced to easily-learned machine attending jobs -- admit that while de-skilling is the consequence of new technologies for the great bulk of the workforce (mainly executive personnel and manual workers), a minority (in particular technical and managerial staff) is facing increasingly complex and difficult tasks requiring different, and often enlarged or higher levels of, skills and job-related competencies.

This demand for more highly qualified manpower seems to be a concern primarily for the initial education and training of young people and indeed in the past the need for new qualifications was mostly met by the recruitment of new entrants to the labour market. This practice, however, is no longer sufficient to cope with present structural and technological change, and this mainly for two reasons: Firstly, the pace and scope of change is such that work skills acquired in a person's youth are no longer sufficient for a whole work-life but need recurrent updating, enlarging and re-orientation in order to adapt to and successfully cope with their change.

### Demographic development and work time

The second reason concerns demographic development. Due to low birth rates in the 1970s in OECD countries, the supply of traditional age students and entrants to the labour market abundant at present will decline sharply in the 1990s. Even allowing for a higher degree of participation in higher education, a number of projections suggest that the supply from this age group will not be sufficient to meet the economy's needs for highly-qualified manpower, i.e. professionals with technical, managerial, analytical and problem-solving qualifications that are usually acquired through higher education studies. If these projections are correct, it can be assumed that demographic pressures will lead to greater adult participation in order to make up for the decrease in traditional age enrolment and entry into the labour market and in response to the prospect of critical skill shortages.

Most of the new technologies are labour-saving and thus reduce the work time necessary to produce a given product or service. The consequence of this is that unless the degree of economic growth is substantially higher than the gain in productivity, the amount of remunerated work will decrease. So far, this development has not had any dramatic impact on daily, weekly or annual working time, but rather on the level of employment. While the great majority of those in employment work 40 or more hours per week, for some 48 weeks a year, a small but growing minority has no remunerated work at all. In other words, necessary and available work has hitherto been distributed on a very unequal basis.

This is not to say that there is no reduction of working time at all; in fact, looking closely into the statistics, we find that annual working hours have been slowly but steadily falling, mostly due to an increase of annual holidays. Also, trade unions in Europe are increasingly demanding a reduction of the work week, and some inroads have been made recently to work weekly hours below the threshold mark of 40. More marked, however, is the change in the length of the individual's working life, which has become shorter -- due to longer periods spent in education before entering the work force and the tendancy to earlier retirement. This development suggests essentially a picture of work being compressed into the middle period of people's lives, leaving the traditional pattern of education-work-retirement unchanged and affording little or no flexibility to adults that might allow for more individual patterns of mixing work and non-work time.

## Part-time employment

However, there is another significant employment phenomenon which is partly counteracting this general observation, namely the growth of part-time employment, which must be considered to have a major impact on adult participation in education. Ideally, part-time work provides both the time to pursue regular studies and a certain level of financial support thus overcoming or, at least, lowering two important hurdles to adult participation. Remunerated part-time employment, which used to be a rather marginal mode of work, has grown rapidly (although there are marked differences between countries), accounting for between 20 and almost 30 per cent of all jobs in the Scandinavian countries, around 15 per cent in the Anglo Saxon Member countries. In eight European countries, one out of every two new jobs created after the first oil crisis was a part-time job.

Although growing in importance, part-time work so far is generally associated with the increased participation of women in the labour market and with easily learned, routine and "dead end" jobs in the service sector. However, there are signs that this may change and part-time work will also become a more common pattern in jobs requiring higher levels of education and training and providing career opportunities. Although available figures on part-time employment do not indicate how many of those who work part-time enrol in educational programmes, it appears, conversely, from the available literature and the country surveys, that most adult students studying part-time are holding a job, full-time, part-time or temporary (cf. Chapter II).

### Unemployment

In presenting here a number of socio-economic determinants which are having, or are presumed to have, a significant impact on adult participation in education, and in particular in higher education, unemployment must be mentioned. In spite of an upturn of economic growth in recent years, unemployment figures have moved relatively little and remain persistently high. A matter of particular concern is that within the 3 million or so unemployed in OECD countries the share of long-term unemployed has increased dramatically. This suggests that the incidence of unemployment is not merely an indication of a short-term mismatch, sectorial or regional, of supply and demand in the labour market but that there are a growing number of people who do not find work because they do not possess the qualifications required for job openings. However, while it is still true that the risk of unemployment is much higher for those with few, or no qualifications (or, in the case of older workers, with obsolete educational qualifications), unemployment can also be found, albeit still at a significantly lower percentage, among people with advanced qualifications including higher education graduates.

### Level of educational attainment

Another factor to be mentioned here is the relatively high level of education of the population in Member countries. It is a well-known fact, and indeed a principal concern of adult education, that those who already enjoy a high level of education are more likely to participate in further education than those who do not. As education in the Member countries (and in particular upper secondary and higher education) has expanded in the 1960s and 1970s to an unprecedented degree, there can be no doubt that demand from adults will substantially increase as the relatively large post-war birth cohorts reach adult age in the years to come.

### Participation of women and the right to personal development

A last factor to be mentioned in this brief array of socio-economic factors which are thought to have a substantial impact on adult enrolment in education is the steady increase in the participation of women in the labour market which is also reflected in the growth of female participation in post-compulsory education. In 1985, more than 56 per cent of women of working age in OECD countries participated in the labour force (up from 49 per cent in 1975) and, while complete equality has not yet been reached, it is generally fair to say that developments in overall female enrolment rates in postcompulsory education, and in particular in general upper secondary and higher education, indicate a real progress towards a more even balance between males and females.

While all of these socio-economic factors -- profound and rapid changes in skill demands, higher unemployment levels, the relative increase of non-work time generally and the growth of part-time employment, the general higher level of education of the population and increased participation of women both in education and in the labour market -- have a bearing on adult demand for continuing education and training, their relative importance is difficult to assess, not least because they do not operate in isolation from one another but often in combination. Moreover, besides these developments there are other factors which contribute to the increase in adult demand. Most important is both the general recognition of a right to personal growth and development which is partly achieved through education and the recognition that, therefore, education is not a process which is confined to a person's youth, but is, like personal growth and development, a life-time affair.

## Motivations towards higher education

These various factors and objectives that lie at the basis of adult demand are reflected in both the field and mode of study chosen by adults as well as in the objectives and motives of actual or potential adult students. More than half of all respondents to various national surveys list vocational oriented purposes, i.e. job improvement or advancement or finding a new job, as their number one motivation (1) while personal development, growth and enjoyment are of less, albeit still very substantial, importance to adult learners. There are considerable variations according to the type of institutions, the field of study, or the nature of the programme chosen by adult students -- partly reflecting the variety of demand, partly due to the way the survey questions have been formulated. Thus, for instance, the multiple choice answer "to acquire skills that will increase capacity to provide for self or family" is highly ambiguous with regard to a distinction between vocational or personal development and probably indicates not only a vague form of question but also a mixed bag of different motivations on the part of the respondent. The same is often true with respect to the field or programme chosen. Thus, for example, foreign languages are a preferred subject of adult learners in the European countries, and especially the smaller ones. But mastering foreign languages can of course serve the double purpose of acquiring or improving additional professional competence and enlarging personal knowledge and experience not linked to worklife responsibilities, e.g. during travelling.

So, the purposes and motivations of adults who enter higher education are quite varied. Nevertheless they can be categorised in simplified, schematic fashion in the following way:

a) Those who enter or re-enter higher education as adults in order to pursue mainstream studies leading to a full first degree or diploma ("delayers", "deferrers", or those who are admitted on credentials for work experience or second-chance educational routes);

b) Those who re-enter to up-date their professional knowledge, or seek to acquire additional qualifications, in order to change occupation or advance in their career ("refreshers", "recyclers");

c) Those without previous experience in higher education, who enrol for professional purposes especially in courses of short duration, though the boundaries between the "professional" and "general" may often not be very clear (e.g. in languages or computer sciences);

d) Those, with or without previous experience in higher education, who enrol for courses with the explicit purpose of personal fulfilment.

It is quite obvious that the different categories require different responses in terms of curriculum, modes of delivery, finance or certification. It is also clear that the quantitative weight of these groups varies considerably. Thus group a) is still relatively small in most countries when compared to the other three categories who pursue what has been labelled continuing education in this report, i.e. studies not aiming at a full academic degree.

Group b) is more important in terms of enrolment and the numbers are increasing -- due to faster technological and social change, thus faster obsolescence of initially acquired skills and knowledge and the need for occupational flexibility and mobility by highly trained manpower. While in the past this demand has often been met by the non-formal sector, in particular professional associations (e.g. further education courses provided by the medical or the bar associations), it appears from the country surveys that higher education institutions are increasingly moving into this sector. This is so not only out of a concern for maintaining enrolment figures, and thus enrolment-based resources, at a time when in some countries the numbers of traditional-age students are decreasing, but also often with the objective of keeping in touch with the community at large, in particular business and the professional groups, in order to adjust curricula to changing demands in the qualifications of university trained manpower. Group c) and d) have traditionally been served by extra-mural or extension departments in the Anglo-Saxon countries, and by non-academic adult education programmes in those countries where universities have no or little tradition of extra-mural provision. As in the case of "refreshers" or "recyclers", potential demand from mature would-be learners falling into these categories must be deemed considerable, the manifestation of this demand depending, however, on the availability and accessibility of suitable offerings.

## 2. ADULT EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

While there is this growing adult demand for education and training, it is not addressed exclusively to higher education institutions. Educational opportunities for adults are provided by a variety of institutions and professional associations in settings ranging from voluntary organisations, churches, trade unions, employers' associations, libraries or museums, or broadcasting media, to public and private schools, colleges and universities, corresponding to their variety of resources. Programmes take a multiplicity of forms, such as classroom tuition, workshops, conferences, seminars, television or radio courses, guided yet mostly self-directed learning programmes, demonstrations, excursions and the like. The exact shape and extension of higher education in this colourful mosaic of adult education opportunities cannot be easily determined as the role of higher education varies considerably from country to country. It is dependent on the overall structure of higher education and the specific functions it has been assigned or assumed as well as on the availability of other, non-academic provision that is specifically geared to, or suitable for, adult needs.

Examples for such non-academic institutions catering for adult learners include, for example, the Volkshochschulen (i.e. Adult Education Colleges) in the German-speaking countries (2) which also have their equivalent in the Scandinavian countries, study circles in Sweden, or the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector in Australia. In the case of Germany, the community-based Volkshochschul-sector, providing some 8 million students annually with adult education courses that can lead to upper secondary school-leaving certificates or other non-academic diploma but commonly do not lead to awards, is one of the principal reasons why universities and Fachhochschulen (polytechnics) play a minor role only with respect to adults. Thus, about eight times as many adults enroll in adult education colleges as compared to total enrolment in higher education degree programmes. About the same ratio applies in the case of Sweden where more than six times as many people are enrolled in study circles as compared to overall participation in higher education (3).

The size and importance in these non-academic adult education sectors are even greater when not only Adult Education Colleges and Study Circles but all the many other providers of adult education are taken into account. Thus, enterprises and trade unions, public radio and TV, the Chambers of Crafts and of Industry and Commerce as well as a number of commercial providers offer a wide variety of vocational and non-vocational courses for adults. Although it is virtually impossible to ascertain the total number of people participating in their programmes -- due to the scarcity of coherent data and the risk of double counting -- it is clear that the great majority of adult education opportunities in these countries are not offered by the formal sector, i.e. general and vocational schools or higher education institutions, but by a highly diversified (non-formal) adult education sector.

This applies even to university-level professional continuing education, i.e. refresher and up-dating courses for professional groups such as physicians, lawyers, teachers, civil engineers, or architects who are holding first (or further) higher education degrees. According to a series of recent studies in Germany, only 5.8 per cent of such courses were provided by higher education institutions, while the remainder is the domain of bodies such as professional associations, various chambers, and specialised institutions outside the regular higher education system (4).

This overall picture of a university type higher education sector relatively little involved in adult education also applies to most other European countries, and to Australia, New Zealand and Japan where a variety of other institutions and bodies caters to adult demand (5). In quantitative terms, this is even true for the United Kingdom where universities have a long-standing tradition of extra-mural provision for adults, a tradition which the more recent polytechnics have followed. Thus, while the number of adults engaged annually in adult education in England and Wales was estimated to be around 6 million annually (representing about 16 per cent of the adult population), only 385 000 were enrolled in universities, some 230 000 of which (60 per cent) in extra-mural departments (6). Although this number is very impressive compared to, say, Japan where only 150 000 students were enrolled in the University Extension Programmes and University Learning Centres (7), it represents only a small fraction of the total adult population engaged in continuing education activities.

The picture is different in North America where universities and colleges play a much larger role with respect to adult learners. This is true both with respect to degree and to non-degree studies. In particular, two-year Junior and Community Colleges offer a great variety of vocationally-oriented but also general education courses, many of which can be taken either for credit leading to a (two-year) associate or a (four-year) bachelor degree or as non-credit courses. Thus, according to a recent survey in Canada, the majority (56 per cent) of adult learners were enrolled in Community colleges and in universities (34 and 22 per cent respectively), while other public institutions, such as school boards or voluntary organisations, employers and unions account for the rest (8). In the United States, according to the country survey, 30 million adults 25 years of age and older participated in organised post-high school learning activities in 1980. Of these, around 6 million received instruction through programmes offered at institutions of higher education (9).

These larger shares of adult students in North America demonstrate a long-standing tradition of serving adults both through extension departments and in regular programmes offered by colleges and university level professional departments and schools. The contrast between North American and the European universities with respect to the education of adults is a reflection of the generally different concepts and roles of higher education held in these continents. Much of the European tradition was built around the Humboldt concept of universities as primarily research institutions and hence emphasis was to be given to scientific research and the combination of research and post-graduate teaching. Under the influence of this model, higher education was by and large accessible to a selected elite only, and only recently have higher education institutions opened up to larger numbers of students from a wider variety of social backgrounds. In North America, while the share of older and more prestigious universities initially followed this pattern of a research university, the majority of institutions, starting with the land-grant colleges, were built on the idea of a university as a service agency for the whole community. It is obvious that this concept implied two consequences: firstly, that the curriculum was to be democratised to serve not so much (or not only) a relatively small elite but to provide broad, liberal and practical education for the community at large, and secondly, that higher education institutions were to respond to the demand from the various groups including the various groups of non-traditional students, including various categories of adults.

While this brief categorisation of the different traditions of higher education in (Continental) Europe and North America is admittedly somewhat sweeping and neglects a number of other very important differences, it is useful when trying to explain apparent differences in the way adults are, or are not, participating in higher education in different countries. In other words, adults and higher education have different relationships depending on the size and importance of the non-academic adult education sector which in turn depends on the accessibility and curriculum of higher education. In countries such as Germany, where university-based education was reserved for would-be researchers or professionals in a limited number of academic occupations, a well-developed non-academic adult education has been serving all those not eligible to pursue the holy grail of higher studies. By contrast, in other countries, such as the United States, the education of adults has been conceived as part of the mission of higher education and while other non-academic providers have played, and continue to play, the leading role, universities and colleges, both two- and four-year, do have an established place in serving adult students. Saying this, it is not suggested that higher education in these countries has fully adapted its curricula or modes of delivery to adult students; in fact, some experts argue that higher education provision for adults in the United States is still marginal compared with what is offered to traditional age groups:

> "Most colleges and universities continue to serve mainly the traditional 18 to 21 year-old student population. Even at Community Colleges, older adults attend mainly in the evenings and are taught mostly by part-time faculty with little allegiance to basic institutional goals. Likewise, at public four-year colleges, the average age of students is increasing; yet professors are accustomed to teaching youths and are reluctant, often for career advancement reasons, to teach adult classes. At most selective universities and independent colleges, the move to accommodate older students has been slow or non-existant." (10)

However dominant the group of traditional-age students in higher education may still be, evidence from the country surveys and other sources suggest that the situation in almost all the Member countries is gradually changing. Although it may be too early to speak of the "greying of the campus" or the "adultification of higher education" (11), a number of innovations have been recently put in place that have enhanced, and will further enhance, adult participation in higher education.

Not all of the growing adult demand for education and training will fall upon the institutions of higher education; non-academic adult education providers too will continue to play an important role. In fact, non-academic adult education has a number of advantages over traditional higher education provision such as frequently dense geographical networks, faculties consisting mainly of practitioners, curricula and attendance options suited to adult needs, and lower psychological barriers to access in the case of would-be learners with poor educational background. On the other hand, higher education establishments are well placed, compared to non-academic providers, to respond to the varied needs of the groups of adult students identified above, not only because they generally have highly-trained teachers, advanced technological equipment and other learning facilities, but also because of the attraction of academic prestige. However, to assume a greater role in serving adults will make it mandatory for higher education to search for new contents and forms of delivery that are compatible with adult interests, their work and family situations and adult modes of learning. A number of present barriers in the way to greater participation are discussed in what follows.

## 3. OBSTACLES TO ADULT PARTICIPATION

Although demand for education and training from adults is growing, many establishments of higher education are little prepared to adapt to this by making adequate provision that responds to the educational needs and specific circumstances of adults. In fact, there is evidence that under the prevailing conditions, adults are actually barred from access. Such barriers have been widely discussed (12) and are commonly classified (13) as "dispositional" (relating to attitude and self-perception of the adult learner, especially with adults of only limited educational background), "institutional" (referring, for example, to lack of suitable courses, inconvenient schedules or locations, or high fees), and "situational" (e.g. lack of time for study due to work, family or other social responsibilities, lack of financial support, means of transportation, child care facilities, etc.).

Available research in most Member countries show that these barriers affect a great number of would-be learners. Most prominent among the reasons given by adults for not enrolling in (higher) education are lack of time and money. Although these reasons are very plausible and may apply in a great number of cases, it has been noted that they are also more socially acceptable than others, such as lack of self-confidence, ability or interest and might therefore more frequently be cited (14). Besides "being busy" and "can't afford it", other reasons frequently cited are lack of information, lack of suitable courses, geographical barriers or lack of entry qualifications. Obviously, there are marked differences on the significance of these obstacles depending on the preferred mode of study and also on the sex, women being particularly affected by family responsibilities. Table I is an example from the United Kingdom that seems rather typical although respondents were asked about the reasons for their non-participation in education generally and not particularly with respect to higher education. Obviously in the case of higher education, the lack of entry qualifications may be more important overall than the Table suggests. As already mentioned, the major barrier that does not show up in this Table (or is hiding behind some of the other categories) is the matter of attitude. At bottom lies the assumption -- still widespread, although gradually losing its importance -- that education, including higher education is only for the young as a preparation for adult life. It is probably more deeply entrenched among adults whose initial education was poor and who have never undertaken any form of continuing education than it is among those who, because of their efforts and success in initial or continuing education, aspire to enroll in higher education courses. However, even among such adults, especially older ones, the fear of being too old to learn and that their knowledge is obsolescent may act as powerful disincentives.

But even for those adults who do not have, or have succeeded in overcoming, such dispositional barriers, the remaining obstacles to access are still formidable. Although the institutional (geographical, financial and structural) barriers have been lowered in many cases by a variety of innovative policies and practice (to be dealt with below), many adult would-be learners continue to be deterred from enrolling. The same is true with respect to situational barriers, i.e. those connected with adults' daily lives. It is telling that the answer "had to look after children and other dependents" figures quite high on the list of reasons for non-participation, in particular in the case of women where this barrier is almost as high as the financial hurdle and, if one would include some of the answers under the rubric "family objected", even more important.

Table I

MAIN REASONS FOR NON-PARTICIPATION IN CONTINUING EDUCATION
LEADING TO A DEGREE (in the United Kingdom)

| Reasons | Type of study | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Part-time | | | Full-time | | |
| | All % | Men % | Women % | All % | Men % | Women % |
| 1. Could not afford it | 26 | 29 | 24 | 32 | 34 | 29 |
| 2. Did not know about suitable courses | 19 | 20 | 19 | 17 | 15 | 18 |
| 3. Did not have entry qualifications | 15 | 14 | 16 | 16 | 17 | 15 |
| 4. Had to look after children and other dependents | 14 | 4 | 22 | 8 | 5 | 11 |
| 5. Not suitable course in the area | 12 | 13 | 11 | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| 6. Could not get time off | 11 | 13 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| 7. Too much travelling involved | 8 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 8 |
| 8. Study would not have given financial benefit | 8 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| 9. Family objected | 5 | 2 | 8 | 11 | 7 | 15 |
| 10. Unable to get enough finance/grant | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 7 | 5 |

Base: All wishing they had followed a degree programme = 100 per cent.

Source: ACACE, Adults: their educational experience and needs, 1982.

Apart from the differences shown in Table I, there are of course others depending on the different types of potential adult students. Thus, for example, the time barrier is of different importance depending on whether the person is in full-time or part-time employment, works shifts or in regular hours, is unemployed or beyond retirement age. These and other variations need not be discussed in abstract and in detail here, as they will emerge again in several instances throughout the report.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Cf. P. Cross, "Adult Learners: Characteristics, Needs, and Interests", in R. Peterson et al. (eds), Lifelong Learning in America, San Francisco (Jossey Bass), 1979; L. Solmon and J. Gordon, The Characteristics and Needs of Adults in Post-secondary Education, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1981; Canadian Association for Adult Education/L'Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes (CAAE/ICEA), From the Adult's Point of View, Toronto/Montreal, 1982, p. 17.

2. Other translations include "Folk High School", "Popular Academy" or "People's Higher Education".

3. K. Abrahamsson, Adult Participation in Swedish Higher Education -- A Study of Organisational Structure, Educational Design and Current Policies, Stockholm (Almquist and Wicksell) 1986, p. 49.

4. J. Allesch et al., Berufsbezogene wissenschaftliche Weiterbildung an den Hochschulen -- Perspektiven und Modelle (Professional Continuing Education through University Level Higher Education Institutions -- Perspectives and Patterns), Bonn (Federal Ministry of Education and Science), 1983.

5. Cf. OECD, Learning Opportunities for Adults, Vol. IV (Participation in Adult Education), Paris, 1977; and R. Petersen, Adult Education and Training in Industrialised Countries, New York (Praeger), 1982.

6. Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE), Continuing Education: From Policies to Practice, Leicester, 1982, pp. 42 and 46.

7. M. Yano, "Adult Learning in Japanese Higher Education -- A Consideration of the Economic Aspects", in J. Klingler/P. Posch (eds.), Studierende mit Berufserfahrung (Students with Work Experience), Vienna (Böhlau) 1986.

8. Canadian Association for Adult Education/L'Institut canadien d'éducation des adultes (CAAE/ICEA), op. cit., p. 21. Note that the respective share of part-time enrolment in Secretary of State, One Person Out of Five, Ottawa, 1984, is 28 per cent only, which indicates that the CAAE/ICEA figures might be somewhat overstated. Cf. also

Paquet, in H.G. Schütze (ed.), *Adults in Higher Education -- Policies and Practice in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada*, Stockholm (Almquist and Wicksell) 1987.

9. A. Wagner, in H.G. Schütze (ed.), *Adults in Higher Education*, *op. cit.*

10. R. Peterson, "Opportunities for Adult Learners", in A. Chickering *et al.* (eds.), *The Modern American College*, San Francisco (Jossey Bass), 1981.

11. R. Weinstock, *The Greying of the Campus*, New York (Educational Facilities Laboratory), 1978; and K. Abrahamsson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

12. Cf. OECD, *Learning Opportunities for Adults*, Vol. III (The Non-Participation Issue), Paris, 1979. D. Istance/H.G. Schütze (eds.), *Recurrent Education: Patterns of Participation and Finance*, an OECD Report, Stockholm, Almquist and Wicksell) 1987. Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE), *op. cit.*

13. Following Patricia Cross, *Adults as Learners*, San Francisco, (Jossey Bass), 1981.

14. ACACE, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

## Chapter II

## ADULTS IN DEGREE AWARDING PROGRAMMES : POLICIES AND PRACTICE

### 1. PARTICIPATION RATES OF ADULT OR MATURE STUDENTS

An international comparison of mature student participation in degree awarding programmes can only take place with reference to the diversity of higher education structures, policies and practices as outlined in the previous Chapter. Different countries employ different definitions as to who exactly constitutes an adult or a mature student and definitions may vary even within the same country according to different purposes, e.g. rules for access, or eligibility for specific financial support. While all use some age definition, which ranges from 21 to 25, some try to distinguish "real" mature students from "late entrants" by stipulating either a certain number of years in employment (including family care) or else that the student should have been away from full-time study for a minimum number of years.

Most time lags identified by national statistics of secondary school graduates who do not directly enrol in higher education are of up to one or two years' duration, thus corresponding either to compulsory military or voluntary social service or else to practical periods that are related to the intended field of study such as internships for medical, law or architectural students. Thus, such delays do not indicate a veritable and protracted period of work or other social experience after leaving secondary education and prior to entering higher education. Moreover, no further data are provided that refer to this group of students who, in the majority, defer the continuation of their education for a relatively short time only. Ultimately then, these statistics, however useful in other respects, are without value to the present study.

The working definition which has served as the basis for the CERI country survey is that the student be aged 25 or over on entry to a degree level course, the age level being chosen as an indicator that the student had left education for a significant number of years. However, it was clear that this definition was a recommendation only, and for a comparative survey to be meaningful, other definitions or distinctions used in the respective countries would have to be taken into account.

Statistics on adult students are very sketchy in all Member states. While available in some countries, in others new enrolments by age group are impossible to obtain and all that is on record is the age breakdown of the total student population. In some instances, even these can be helpful to identify students who are "mature" at entry although, of course, the degree of accuracy of this measure is directly related to the average age at enrolment and the average length of degree courses. Obviously, in countries such as the United Kingdom where the average age of enrolment is relatively young and average degree course relatively short, estimates of mature student participation will be much the same regardless of whether they are based on new entrants or total enrolments. In countries such as Germany, on the other hand, where average age at entry is older and degree programmes tend to be significantly longer, there is a large discrepancy between the two measures.

Table II.1

ENROLMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION, 1983 (1)

| Countries | Total Enrolment in '000s | Enrolment as % of Population | Enrolment Ratio of 19-24 Age Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Australia | 349 | 2.3 | 21.8 |
| Austria | 154 | 2.0 | 20.4 |
| Belgium | 202 | 2.1 | 20.9 |
| Canada | 988 | 4.0 | 34.7 |
| Denmark | 111 | 2.2 | 24.7 |
| Finland | 120 | 2.5 | 26.5 |
| France | 1 179 | 2.2 | 23.2 |
| Germany | 1 405 | 2.3 | 23.3 |
| Greece | 121 | 1.3 | 14.2 |
| Ireland | 60 | 1.7 | 17.6 |
| Italy | 1 030 | 1.8 | 19.7 |
| Japan | 2 410 | 2.0 | 24.9 |
| Netherlands | 379 | 2.6 | 25.5 |
| New Zealand | 85 | 2.7 | 23.9 |
| Norway | 83 | 2.0 | 22.3 |
| Portugal | 81 | 1.0 | 7.5 |
| Spain | 731 | 1.9 | 19.6 |
| Sweden | 205 | 2.5 | 32.9 |
| Switzerland | 91 | 1.4 | 15.5 |
| United Kingdom | 858 | 1.5 | 16.6 |
| United States | 12 426 | 5.3 | 47.9 |

1. Or nearest year available.

Sources: OECD Demographic Data Bank.
OECD Education Data Bank.

While Table II.1 gives an overview of total enrolment in higher education and of the enrolment ratio of the traditional age group, i.e. the 19-24 year-olds, Table II.2 attempts to summarise the available data on enrolments in higher education by those 25 and over. Although incomplete and subject to reservations of the kind just outlined, corroborative evidence from the country surveys suggests that it is fair to identify three broad groupings, based on the extent of mature student participation in higher education.

Table II.2

PROPORTION OF TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION AND NEW ENTRANTS AGED 25 OR OVER AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, 1981/82 (1)

| | Proportion of Higher Education Students Aged 25 or Over | | | Proportion of New Entrants Aged 25 or Over | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Country | Male | Female | Total | Male | Female | Total |
| Austria | 30.1 | 20.1 | 26.0 | 5.3 | 4.1 | 4.8 |
| Finland (2) | 51.4 | 47.7 | 49.5 | 21.4 | 16.7 | 19.6 |
| France (3) | 37.5 | 27.6 | 32.5 | 10.6 | 8.0 | 9.2 |
| Germany (4) | 46.0 | 31.0 | 40.2 | 9.6 | 7.3 | 8.7 |
| Sweden | 60.8 | 62.6 | 61.8 | 50.2 | 58.1 | 54.6 |
| United Kingdom (5) | 21.4 | 16.7 | 19.6 | 18.1 | 14.4 | 16.7 |
| Australia (6) | 42.1 | 41.2 | 41.7 | 32.9 | 31.1 | 32.1 |
| Canada (7) | 39.0 | 44.3 | 41.7 | - | - | 10.0 |
| United States | 32.5 | 38.7 | 35.9 | 18.1 | 28.9 | 24.0 |

1. Or nearest year.
2. University and degree-granting institutions.
3. Public universities: (including the Antilles, Guyane and la Réunion).
4. Universities and equivalent degree-granting institutions only.
5. New entrants refer to full-time students only (includes approximately 31 000 post-graduate students). Total number of students exludes 65 268 Open University students aged 25 or over.
6. Third level statistics relate to universities, colleges of advanced education and non-government (private) tertiary colleges (TAFE not included).
7. Universities and colleges.

Sources: Enrolment rates for Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States: OECD Education Data Bank, 1981/82; the data for Austria and Sweden from country surveys.

First, at the relatively low participation end of the scale, are countries where fewer than 10 per cent of students in degree programmes are estimated to be mature students. These include France, Germany, Austria and Japan (the latter not being included in the Table). Second, in the middle grouping, are those with an estimated participation rate of between 10 and 20 per cent of all students. Countries in this grouping include Finland and the United Kingdom (with the latter at the higher end of this grouping). Third, the top end of the scale is represented by the United States, Australia and in particular Sweden, the latter with an estimated mature student participation of above 50 per cent.

It will be apparent throughout the following analysis as it relates to issues of facilitating adult entry into degree awarding programmes that these very general groupings tend to recur. Although there are a variety of factors explaining these country differentials and there may be no straightforward "cause and effect" relationship between policy attempts to decrease structural and other barriers to mature student participation, there can be little doubt that those countries which have adopted the most flexible policies in relation to admissions procedures, part-time study options, credit transfer and financial support are also those which have the greatest proportion of mature students.

Conversely, as can be expected, the existence of institutional barriers to entry, such as the unavailability of part-time or distance study, certainly does militate against many adults returning to study, although the necessity to lower or eliminate such barriers is often not recognised. Thus, countries with low participation rates may find themselves in the type of a "vicious circle" argumentation such as the following: since enrolment figures of "adult" or "mature" students, i.e. those aged 25 or over, play no important role, no specific organisational, administrative, curricular and financial arrangements need to be made for this group. On the other hand, it could be argued with equal plausibility that the lack of specific arrangements for mature students has had the result that the proportion of such students to the total student numbers is relatively insignificant.

However, even in countries with particularly low participation rates, (although it is difficult to obtain comparative longitudinal data on trends in participation by adults in higher education), the variety of factors identified in Chapter I lead to the assumption that the numbers have been growing in recent years and to the expectation that they will continue to do so.

In trying to interpret considerable contrasts in the size of adult participation in several of the countries one must not lose sight of the fact that the existence of a developed non-academic adult education sector is a major factor. Thus, the low participation rates in Germany and Austria can be partly explained by the availability of a well developed and funded system of evening and spare time community colleges (Volkshochschulen). On the other hand, adult education does not lead to academic degrees or diplomas and for those adults who aim -- for various reasons that will be discussed below -- at such degrees the availability of non-credit instruction is no real alternative to higher education. Therefore, to establish a direct and causal relationship between low participation in higher education and the availability of adult education would be fallacious. Sweden, where adult education has a long tradition and adult participation in higher education is also very high, is a good illustration of this.

Another factor that might have been presupposed to help explain the differences in adult participation rates is their dependence on the participation rates of traditional age students. This could be seen as working in two opposite directions. On the one hand, it might be hypothesised that in countries with relatively low participation rates for conventional age students, there would be considerable interest amongst adults in attempting to compensate for this by seeking to enter higher education at a later age. Conversely, one could argue that in countries where a relatively high proportion of the younger age groups attend higher education, this will have a "spin off" effect in later years, as it is the better educated members of the population who are most likely to undertake further studies.

Nevertheless, there seems to be no obvious relationship between the participation ratio of the 19 to 24 age group in higher education in a particular country and the level of adults who seek to enter higher education. In fact, no clearcut patterns emerge from the available data (cf. Tables II.1 and II.2). Thus, to take a few examples, the United States, Sweden and Canada have both high conventional and mature participation rates. On the other hand, the United Kingdom which has a fairly low conventional participation rate, shows a relatively elevated mature participation rate. Germany and Austria have conventional participation rates of about 20 per cent, but enrolment figures are very low for students who enrol at mature age.

Thus, while traditional age participation figures do not, or not yet, have any clearly discernable effect on adult enrolment, the other two variables, barriers and the availability of non-academic adult education, certainly do -- although caution must be exercised in the way their effect is assessed. In particular, it must be noted that no single factor can be held responsible for high or conversely low adult participation and that several factors are operating in combination.

Owing to the nature of the country surveys which provided the bulk of the data and information for the present Chapter, only situational and, in particular, institutional barriers in our classification will be discussed here. However, before turning to the organisational and financial barriers that hinder a greater adult participation, it is appropriate to look at the main characteristics of those adults who have overcome existing obstacles and are enroled in higher education degree programmes.

## 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF MATURE STUDENTS

### Data sources

This, and subsequent sections, are essentially based on the country surveys conducted within the CERI project (1). While the different sources and the assumptions on which the statistics are based will be identified, some initial clarifications are necessary here about the nature of the data available.

The report on the United States offers some of the best material on mature students, based as it is on such sources as that from the National Centre for Education Statistics and the U.S. Bureau of the Census "School Enrolment" figures. Where possible, the data has been re-analysed according to the operational definition of mature students applied in the surveys (that is, those aged 25 or over at the time of enrolment) and is comprehensive, being based on census figures. The only problem lies in the fact that the figures tend to refer to total enrolments rather than new ones.

The United Kingdom report mainly refers to England and Wales and contains some very useful and detailed information on mature students in higher education. Again it comes from two main sources, the national statistics of the Department of Education and Science, and a large scale sample survey in England and Wales commissioned by the same Department and undertaken over the period 1980-1982. This survey, which was carried out by a consortium from the Open University, Lancaster University and the Polytechnic of Central London, defined mature students as being those aged 21 or over and covered adults enrolled in a wide range of courses including those outside the higher education structure. For purposes of the CERI project this data has been re-analysed to include only those aged 25 or over and who participated in degree level courses at institutions of higher education.

The data for the Swedish situation are derived from a variety of national and institutional statistics and several sample surveys. An important point that should be borne in mind in reviewing these figures is that Sweden enjoys an integrated system of higher education where courses that are part of general degree study programmes can also be taken as "separate" courses. In fact it is in these that the majority of mature students are found, and it could be argued that as they are more akin to the concept of continuing education than that of conventional degree programmes, comparability with other countries is made more difficult.

In the Canadian study, the category of part-time students in higher education is used as an operational definition for mature students because of the lack of appropriate data. This is justified by the fact that the great majority of full-time students consists of 15-24 year-olds; adults aged 25 years and older represent only one-tenth of the full-time student population. On the other hand, adults aged 25 years and older make up practically three-quarters of the total part-time student population. Part-time thus seems to be the main route by which adults re-enter the educational system.

There are few data available on mature students from Germany, France, Austria and Finland. The authors of the country reports have therefore had to make the best use of very limited sources. The general difficulty of obtaining accurate and comprehensive data on adult students is indeed worth stressing, and it is hoped that this study may encourage national and institutional authorities to get this situation improved -- if only to give substance to their own future planning.

## Who are the adult students?

It is vital to avoid the pitfall of treating adult students as a homogeneous group. In the first place, such generalisations disguise the fact that actual, as well as potential, adult students come from a great diversity of backgrounds with correspondingly different aims and educational needs. Secondly, it is essential to examine in some detail exactly who the current mature students are in order to ascertain whether specific target groups are appropriately served. One of these groups are the so-called "second chance" students, whose participation has been seen as an important step toward greater equality and compensation for earlier educational inequalities.

It should be useful here, therefore, to single out the main features that characterise the adults who tend to return to study. Though, once again, the available data are both sketchy and unsystematic, it is possible to identify patterns and interesting similarities that emerge from the country surveys.

### a) Age

The age we have chosen to define adult students is admittedly arbitrary, although it is a central one used in population, employment and educational statistics by the countries surveyed. However, while this broad age band of "25 plus" is useful for summary purposes,it itself represents a category which can in some cases disguise more than it reveals. Table II.3 shows a more detailed breakdown of the age distribution of students in higher education in the countries surveyed. Bearing in mind that the figures refer to the total student population rather than new enrolments, it is quite clear that the typical mature student is in fact relatively young. Within this "younger mature" group there are likely to be quite a substantial number who are "deferrers" in the sense that they opt to postpone entry into higher education for a few years, as distinct from people for whom a genuine second chance has presented itself.

While it is not at all surprising that the bulk of adults in higher education are found in the age groups that are also the period of peak career development, this phenomenon does raise questions about redressing the educational disadvantages from which older generations suffer. In general in all the countries surveyed, mature age individuals have received less formal education than those from younger age groups. For example, in the United States, 24 per cent of the 25 to 34 year-old age cohort were college graduates in 1985; while only 18 per cent of 45 to 54 year-olds had reached the same level. And, even though the latter share represents a significant gain since 1976, the improvement has occurred largely due to the aging of younger, better educated age cohorts rather than policies and the effects of programmes to promote adult participation in higher education (2).

Essentially, it would appear that while all adults face barriers in returning to study, those encountered by the older age group are likely to be relatively greater than those facing younger adults. Apart from their lower levels of initial education and consequent attitudinal and learning barriers, in some countries the higher education systems themselves have structural barriers which discriminate against older students, particularly in relation to student support schemes. In Germany, for example, the Federal Education Assistance Act stipulates that education assistance should be granted only to students who have not reached 30 when beginning their studies.

Table II.3

### AGE DISTRIBUTION OF TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SELECTED COUNTRIES (1981/82) (1)

| Countries | | Age Groups | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Under 25 | 25 and Over | 25-29 | 30-34 | 35-40 | 40+ |
| Austria | | 74 | 26 | | | | |
| Finland (2) | | 51 | 49 | 30 | 12 | 5 | 3 |
| France (3) | | 67 | 33 | 19 | | 14 | |
| Germany (4) | | 60 | 40 | 32 | 5 | 3 | |
| Sweden | | 38 | 62 | 24 | 14 | 11 | 13 |
| United Kingdom(5) | Total | 80 | 20 | 9 | | 11 | |
| | F.T. | 88 | 12 | | | | |
| | P.T. | 55 | 45 | | | | |
| Australia (6) | Total | 58 | 42 | 15 | 18 | | 8 |
| | P.T. | 29 | 71 | 23 | 32 | | 15 |
| Canada (7) | Total | 57 | 42 | 16 | 11 | 7 | 8 |
| | F.T. | 86 | 14 | 9 | 4 | | 1 |
| | P.T. | 24 | 76 | 23 | 35 | | 18 |
| United States | Total | 64 | 36 | 14 | 10 | 5 | 7 |
| | F.T. | 87 | 13 | | | | |
| | P.T. | 40 | 60 | | | | |

F.T. Full-time
P.T. Part-time

1. Or nearest year.
2. University and degree-granting institutions.
3. Public universities: (including the Antilles, Guyane and la Réunion).
4. Universities and equivalent degree-granting institutions only.
5. New entrants refer to full-time students only (includes approximately 31 000 post-graduate students). Total number of students excludes 65 268 Open University students aged 25 or over.
6. Third level statistics relate to universities, colleges of advanced education and non-government (private) tertiary colleges (TAFE not included).
7. Universities and colleges.

Sources: Enrolment rates for Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States: OECD Education Data Bank (1981/82); the data for Austria and Sweden from country surveys.

A contrasting example is the grant scheme in the United Kingdom where mature students are eligible for two additional allowances: one is for the maintenance of dependants (spouse or other adult and/or children); the second is an older student allowance which is based on age.

Finance is not the only area where student age acts as a factor of discrimination. Admission policies provide another example. Thus, in Sweden, the majority of students are admitted according to the 25:4 rule -- if we include both students in degree programmes and in so-called separate courses. This rule requires that applicants to be admitted must be 25 years or older and possess at least four years of work experience, while only limited contingents of students of lower age are admitted (3). The Swedish rule is the result of a policy aiming at reforming the entire post-compulsory sector of education and training by making the concept of "recurrent education" the guiding organisational principle. In none of the other Member countries do similar radical policies of educational change exist, although there are a number of specialised higher educational institutions that discriminate against admission of younger age students, such as the Open University in the United Kingdom where, prior to 1985, only students of 21 years and above were admitted.

### b) Educational background

In spite of considerable variations in the degree of "openness" of systems of higher education, the country reports all confirm that the majority of mature students in higher education tend already to enjoy a relatively high level of initial education. We will examine in more detail special admissions procedures and entry qualifications for adults later; the point at issue here is that the disadvantaged adult benefitting from a second chance to enter higher education represents in fact a very small part of the whole mature student phenomenon. The typical adult in higher education appears more likely to be there because of previous educational advantages rather than disadvantages.

The previous educational profile of mature students can be clearly seen in the United Kingdom. A comparison between survey results showing the highest educational qualification attained by mature students in higher education and those of the population at large highlights how the former tend to be considerably better qualified than the latter. Whereas about three-quarters of the general adult population have achieved less than the final school examinations (that is, below "A" level or equivalent) only one-quarter of the mature students in the survey fall in this category. While these figures must be interpreted with caution since the population figures would include a higher proportion of older people than the survey of mature students, they certainly pose questions about access to higher education. In relation to the conventional higher education entry qualification, about 30 per cent of mature students have "A" level or equivalent standard compared to 5 per cent of the population as a whole. What is most striking of all, however, is that about 45 per cent of mature students have achieved above "A" level standard (compared to 15 per cent of the population). In other words, this proportion of adults currently in higher education has previously enjoyed some form of further or higher education after completing secondary school which has led to a formal education qualification.

Even in Sweden, where mature students are in the majority in many courses in institutions of higher education, this does not imply strong participation of so-called underprivileged adults with a restricted educational background.

On the basis of this analysis, therefore, there must be serious concern that, if present trends continue, mature student participation in higher education might actually result in increasing inequalities amongst different sections of the population rather than making for a decrease in such differences.

### c) Gender

While there are still quite substantial differences in the proportion of female students in institutions of higher education among the survey countries, the one consistent pattern is that in all countries this proportion has been increasing (4). The example of Germany can be taken as fairly typical, where a noticeable feature of the trend toward growth of student numbers is a proportionally greater increase in the numbers of women students enrolled in all kinds of higher education institutions: the proportion of women students among the new entrants increased on average over all higher education institutions from 27 per cent in 1960 to 41.6 per cent in 1981 (but has slightly decreased thereafter, standing at 38.4 per cent in 1984).

For a number of reasons, one would expect to find increasing numbers of women entering higher education as adults -- in particular in view of the steady increase in labour force participation rates of women and the fact that in many countries women have been under-represented amongst conventional higher education students. Reviewing the data from the country studies, some of which are summarised in Table II.4, certain variations can be discerned. In Sweden, Finland and the United States, for instance, it appears that (a) women represent at least half of all conventional students, (b) women represent a relatively larger proportion of the mature student body, and (c) they are more likely to study part-time than men. Thus, for example, while in the United States half of the conventional age student body is women, they account for 59 per cent of the estimated mature student body.

This situation contrasts with that in Britain, Germany, Austria and Australia where women students still tend to be under-represented in higher education. It appears in these countries that at best they are equally likely as men to enter higher education as mature students. In the case of Germany and Austria the situation is worse, for while a minority of conventional students are women (42 per cent or 45 per cent respectively) an even lower proportion of the estimated mature student is female (28 per cent and 31 per cent respectively). It is interesting to note also that in Britain, in contrast particularly to the United States and Canada, women are less likely to return as adult part-time students, namely at a rate of 51 per cent as opposed to 60 per cent of the men. A third pattern can be observed in France where women are in the majority in the traditional age groups while they are still slightly under-represented in the mature age bracket. However, when looking at the new entrants of this age group, this gap is very narrow indeed (48 per cent versus 52 per cent males).

## Table II.4

## DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SELECTED COUNTRIES BY SEX AND AGE (1982)

| | Under 25 | | 25 and Over | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | |
| Austria | 55 | 45 | 69 | 31 | All Students |
| Finland | 48 | 52 | 52 | 48 | All Students |
| | 45 | 55 | 45 | 55 | New Entrants |
| France | 46 | 54 | 57 | 43 | All Students |
| | 45 | 55 | 52 | 48 | New Entrants |
| Germany | 57 | 43 | 72 | 28 | All Students |
| | 58 | 42 | 71 | 29 | New Entrants |
| Sweden | 46 | 54 | 44 | 56 | All Students |
| United Kingdom | 60 | 40 | 67 | 33 | All Students |
| Australia | 54 | 46 | 55 | 45 | All Students |
| | 52 | 48 | 54 | 46 | New Entrants |
| | 59 | 41 | 55 | 45 | Part-Time |
| Canada | 53 (F.T.) | 47 (F.T.) | 40 (P.T.) | 60 (P.T.) | |
| United States | 50 | 50 | 41 | 59 | All Students |

Sources: OECD Education Data Bank, and Austrian and Swedish country surveys.

It is interesting to compare the country figures with those on female participation in the labour market. As can be seen from Table II.2 and Table II.6, the proportion of female students aged 25 and over is particularly high in Sweden and Finland which are also in the lead among OECD countries with respect to female participation in paid employment. The same correlation applies in the case of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, where female participation is relatively high both in the labour market and as concerns new entrants to higher education.

There are two other important interlinking variables which must be considered before accepting these figures at face value, and these relate first to the types of higher education institutions where female mature students tend to be found, and second to the subject areas which they tend to study. For example, while most countries are attempting to reduce numbers in teacher training colleges, women are consistently more likely to be found in such colleges than universities. It also appears that the traditional choice of disciplines as between young men and women at university -- women concentrating on education, social sciences and the liberal arts, and under-represented in scientific and technical subjects -- is reproduced among adult students. This will be discussed below.

### d) Class or social origin

Educational attainment is generally regarded as the main vehicle for achieving occupational and hence social mobility. Studies of conventional students in higher education usually look at parents' (in particular, fathers') educational achievement and/or occupational status as the starting point for mobility. The pattern is the same everywhere with students having parents in working class occupations consistently under-represented, although the degree of their disadvantage varies from country to country. To take one fairly typical example: in Germany, although the percentage of first year students with fathers in working class occupations rose from 10.3 per cent in 1966 to 18 per cent in 1982, the children from this class continue to be greatly under-represented at this level in higher education as the percentage of workers among all gainfully employed stood at 42.2 per cent. However, this form of analysis is not adequate when examining the class background of adult students -- a much more complex matter. The vast majority of adult students will already have participated in the labour force, and possibly in other forms of post-compulsory education, before returning; hence, many will already have established an occupational position in their own right.

There is some evidence to suggest that only a minority of mature students can be regarded as using higher education as a means of achieving radical upward social mobility, transgressing class boundaries. In fact, it appears that the probability of a mature student in a degree programme having had a working class occupational position prior to entry is about the same as a conventional student having a parent of that class. To take the example of Britain, the most recent or present job of around 70 per cent of mature students in higher education fall into the top two groupings of the Registrar General's categories of social class (professionals, employers and upper grade employees). In contrast, the jobs of just under 20 per cent fall into the intermediate non-manual category, while only about 10 per cent are classed as manual worker (5).

Evidence regarding the relationship between social class and the mode of study mature students select is somewhat conflicting. In situations where continuing professional and commercial education is organised on a part-time basis, it seems that the majority of participants usually come from the upper social classes. On the other hand, part-time study increases access to higher education for members of the lower middle and working classes by permitting them to continue working as they study. So, in Canada for example, relatively more part-time than full-time students are recruited from more modest social backgrounds (6).

### e) Factors of employment and income from work

The persistent high unemployment in OECD countries seems to have a double impact on adult participation. First, traditional students are negatively affected by the gloomy employment prospects many of them face, (although academic unemployment is still running at a considerably lower level than elsewhere on the labour market). They have, therefore, the tendency to remain longer in the higher education system using it as a "park and learn" device. On the other hand, unemployed adults who do not possess a higher education qualification may be motivated to pursue degree studies rather than sitting idly without work. Although this might look a good alternative to unemployment (both from an individual and a societal standpoint), unemployment benefit regulations in most countries prohibit adults from doing this, in effect depriving them either of their economic base or the chance of pursuing degree studies. This contributes to the necessity for many to combine part-time work and part-time study, a formula that enables the mature learner to maintain a self-earned basis of income while pursuing studies for a higher education degree. The enormous increase both in part-time employment and part-time studies would seem to call attention to the increasing importance of this combination. It must not be concluded, however, that its effect will not have serious repercussions for the success rate of studies undertaken, in particular where responsibilities as a parent must be combined not only with study but also with work. The likelihood of dropping out or failing (to pass the exam) is obviously much higher than in the case of students who can devote their full-time and attention to their studies.

As with all other aspects of the mature student population, it is very difficult to obtain comparable data on their employment situation. Table II.5 attempts to summarise such data as are available. As far as possible the employment situation has been simplified into whether or not the respondents (the data are in almost all cases based on survey results) were in paid employment while studying as mature students. Those in employment include both part-time and full-time work. Where separate information was available within the category "not in paid employment", the main subgroup was, of course, those who described themselves as full-time students, with women working in the home as housewives accounting for most of the remainder.

A special case is Germany, where studies are supposed to be pursued on a full-time basis, steady employment -- even part-time -- being considered as incompatible with the status of a student. The sole exception is the German Distance University at Hagen where students are allowed to enrol on a part-time basis and thus to work beside their studies (7).

Despite the sketchiness of the data two trends are particularly clear. The first is that the vast majority of part-time mature students in higher education in all countries are concurrently in some form of paid employment -- ranging from about three-quarters in Sweden and the United Kingdom to between 80 and 90 per cent in the United States and Canada. The second point of interest is that quite a number of adult students manage to combine full-time study with a permanent employment situation and although there are no data on the value of the employment one can presume that at least some of them combine full-time study with full-time employment. Thus, a Canadian study found that 75 per cent of students combine a full-time job with part-time studies while some six per cent combine both full-time studies and full-time work.

The importance of examining the participation of the unemployed in higher education was raised at the introduction to this section. Only the United States and British studies included a separate category for the unemployed -- the United States study used the phrase "looking for work". While the figures are lower than the actual unemployment rates they do seem to support the view that some people who are out of work are taking the opportunity to try to achieve a higher education standard.

Table II.5

EXAMPLES OF EMPLOYMENT SITUATION OF MATURE STUDENTS IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SELECTED COUNTRIES (1)

| **Sweden** | Part-Time | | Full-Time |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Under 25 | 25 or Over | |
| Paid Employment | 27 | 75 | - |
| Not in Paid Employment | 73 | 25 | - |

| **United Kingdom** (2) | Open University | Polytechnics | Universities |
|---|---|---|---|
| Paid Employment | 75 | 63 | 26 |
| Not in Paid Employment | 25 | 37 | 73 |
| (of which unemployed) | (3) | (3) | (1) |

| **Canada** (3) | Part-Time (%) | Full-Time (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Paid Employment | 89 | 33 |
| Not in Paid Employment | 11 | 67 |

| **United States** | Part-Time (%) | Full-Time (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Paid Employment | 83 | 53 |
| Not in Paid Employment | 17 | 47 |
| (of which unemployed) | (6) | (4) |

1. All data for 1981 except for Canada (1978) and Sweden (1975).
2. Open University students and correspondence polytechnic mature students approximately two-thirds part-time; university mature students less than ten per cent part-time.
3. Students of all age groups.

_Source_: Country surveys.

Table II.6

FEMALE PARTICIPATION RATES IN EMPLOYMENT (1985) (1)

| Country | % |
|---|---|
| Australia | 54.3 |
| Austria | 51.1 |
| Belgium (2) | 50.4 |
| Canada | 62.4 |
| Denmark (2) | 73.8 |
| Finland | 75.0 |
| France | 55.0 |
| Germany | 50.4 |
| Greece (2) | 40.4 |
| Ireland (2) | 37.0 |
| Italy | 41.3 |
| Japan | 57.1 |
| Netherlands (2) | 40.8 |
| New Zealand (2) | 46.0 |
| Norway | 68.3 |
| Portugal (2) | 58.2 |
| Spain | 33.3 |
| Sweden | 78.0 |
| Switzerland | 53.3 |
| Turkey (2) | 40.7 |
| United Kingdom | 59.8 |
| United States | 64.0 |

1. Defined as the total female labour force divided by the population of working age (15-64 years old).

2. 1984.

Source: OECD Employment Outlook, Paris, 1986.

Another issue relating to the employment status of adult students is that in some countries workers and employees are entitled, either by law or collective agreements, to educational leave of absence, thus guaranteeing a secure job held open while they are completing higher education studies. In all OECD countries where such schemes exist, with the exception of Sweden, entitlements are too short to pursue full degree studies. However, where educational leave schemes exist, they are beginning to play a more important role in continuing education activities.

Data on the income of mature students are available for only two of the countries included in the surveys, England and Wales and the United States. Once again, the trends relate to the mode of study of the mature student. In the United States, for example, the available data indicate that relatively large proportions of full-time adult students are drawn from the lower ends of the income distribution, while just the opposite pattern obtains among adults enrolling part-time. The British study confirms this pattern which in turn reasserts the importance of part-time study options in assisting adults to maintain their income level while engaging in some form of study. It would appear that such grants and loans as are available to mature students for full-time study do not adequately compensate for loss of earnings. We will return to this important point.

### f) Family situation

Obviously because of their age, mature students are more likely than conventional age students to have a spouse and dependent children. There appears to have been very little research on how this affects the problems adults face in returning to study in terms of financial commitments and in terms of time and space for study. In the United Kingdom survey of mature students (21 and over) taking courses leading to some form of qualification, the main problems mentioned by respondents related to organising their time. It is interesting to note that the time restriction placed on them by family commitments were mentioned as a problem by more respondents (49 per cent) than those who mentioned the problem of work restrictions (43 per cent).

It appears that, in general, the family situation of mature students broadly reflects that of the population at large for the appropriate age group. Thus, for example in the United Kingdom, about eight per cent of adults in 1982 were single parents and this is about the proportion of single parents amongst mature students. As many countries are experiencing an increase in single parent families (the majority of whom are headed by women) the special problems they face in returning to study in terms of financial support, child care facilities and the like, need careful consideration.

## 3. ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Here we will examine various organisational policies and practices in relation to adults in degree programmes under the headings of admission procedures, types of courses and institutions, part-time and distance methods of study, credit transfer, and information and counselling. In considering each of these topics, the objective will be to review the main types of responses which different countries have made to the needs of adult students, to attempt to identify trends, differences and similarities, and in particular to highlight innovative approaches which might serve as models for action.

One important distinction that can be discerned in reviewing the different approaches taken relates to whether a strategy has been adopted which places the main emphasis on improving access for adults onto existing courses in existing institutions or whether, on the other hand, the emphasis is placed on developing new forms of courses and institutions which are specially geared to the needs and interests of mature students. To make this distinction is not to say that within any one system of higher education a variety of different strategies may not occur -- it simply provides a useful way of categorising different approaches.

Under the first strategy, the emphasis is placed on facilitating the entry by adults (with or without conventional entry qualifications) to existing degree level programmes. The goal is to try to develop new routes to higher education which can range from examinations which act as a form of mature matriculation, through recognition of work experience, to totally open access systems. The important implication of widening modes of access for adults into higher education is that the system itself is also forced to become more flexible and responsive. Having gained access, adults seek forms of provision which recognise the realities and particular circumstances of adult life -- in particular, part-time study opportunities which permit study while at the same time earning a living, and modular courses and credit transfer which provide a degree of flexibility needed to fit studies into the other preoccupations of adult students. By empnasizing the importance of such forms of provision, it should be noted that these features, if generally available, will obviously have repercussions for other students and for the whole system of higher education.

The second approach is based on the assumption that adults have a variety of very special needs, different from those of conventional students, which are best catered to either through special courses in existing institutions or by the establishment of totally new institutions. Obviously this approach has great benefit for the adult student in that he or she is not simply being accommodated within a system designed for a totally different body of students, since one of the problems that presently tend to prevent adults from participating is that they are expected to fit into courses aimed at, and take exams designed for, traditional age students. However, it can be argued that there may be a potential danger in this approach in that the establishment of special institutions for adults may lead to their simply operating as a parallel system (possibly even "second class") to the conventional higher education structure, permitting the latter to continue to operate in its centuries old tradition, largely unchanged.

### a) Admissions procedures for mature students

While overall variations in the degree of selectivity of systems of higher education exist between countries, differences also exist within countries where certain institutions of higher education tend to be more selective than others.

However, regardless of the degree of selectiveness or openness of particular institutions or systems of higher education, the latter have traditionally all formed an integrated part of a sequential pattern of education. The qualified school leaver is the stereotypical new entrant to degree level courses, and the structure of institutions, courses and regulations have reflected this. Adult students have many barriers to overcome in returning to higher education (financial, family and work commitments, attitudinal, etc.); in addition, however, there is the problem that, with the notable exceptions of Sweden and probably the United States, they are entering institutions which, in general, are geared towards the needs of a totally different body of students. Furthermore, it is clear from the previous section on the educational background of mature students that those whose initial level of education is low face particular problems in gaining access to higher education. It is therefore of considerable importance to investigate how the higher education institutions of the survey countries have responded to this new category of student.

While there is a clear recognition in the country studies of the fact that conventional admissions procedures are often inappropriate for adult applicants, there are marked differences in the degree of responsiveness of the various systems of higher education to this problem. In addition, within any one system there can be significant differences in the way that different types of institutions have responded to the challenges posed by the increasing interest of adults in higher education.

In looking at the flexibility of admissions procedures across the different countries surveyed it certainly does appear that, overall, there is a fairly direct correlation between the number of mature students in higher education and the degree of overall flexibility in this respect. It would be very misleading, however, if, in some countries, the institutional differences were not also explored. To take the example of the United Kingdom, while the universities retain relatively conventional admissions policies, the Open University is one of the few examples from any country of an institution of higher education which has a totally open access policy.

With this caution in mind, it is possible to identify countries which represent the different stages along a continuum which ranges from the type of system which is least open to the adult student seeking to enter degree level programmes to that which appears to be most open in this respect.

The main stages along this continuum can be identified as follows:

- -- Practically no special arrangements are made for adult entrants, beyond perhaps facilitating the way for them to sit for conventional school leaving or university entrance examinations;
- -- The establishment of special forms of mature student matriculation in terms of examinations and aptitude tests specially designed for adult applicants to higher education;
- -- Recognition of the value of previous work experience (including household work and child care) as a basis for entering into higher education. A further development of this idea is to award certain credit exemptions for this experience;

-- Totally open access, where essentially selection occurs after rather than before entry into higher education.

**Germany**

Germany, which has one of the lowest proportions of mature entrants in higher education, may serve as an example of a system that appears to have done very little to make higher education more accessible to mature applicants. The general upper-secondary leaving certificate (Abitur) qualifying for university entrance or the leaving certificate in special subjects constitute the prerequisite for admission to degree level courses at the majority of institutions of higher education (the colleges of art and music are exceptions, admission requirements varying according to the training goal). In addition, there are special entrance examinations for talented applicants with job experience -- however, only 0.5 per cent of the new entrants are entering this route.

Some of the Federal States (Länder) have moved towards a lowering of access requirements but these attempts are somewhat timid and inconclusive, in particular since the universities themselves have been reluctant, on the whole, to accommodate a greater number of mature students. A notable exception is the State of Lower Saxony, where adults over 25 without an upper secondary school leaving certificate can acquire entry qualifications through an aptitude test. Eligible for this test are persons who either hold a recognised vocational qualification and have worked in their respective field for at least 2 years, or, without such a qualification, have taken care of their own household with at least three persons, a dependent child or a handicapped person for at least five years. Applicants have to prove, for example by participation in established adult education courses, that they have prepared themselves for this test. Although the test is by no means easy to pass for persons from a low education background (consisting of two supervised written tests of five hours duration each, another written test in a foreign language or mathematics of three hours as well as two oral examinations), in 1984 around 4 000 students of higher education in the State (more than 4 per cent of the total student body) acquired their entry qualifications via this aptitude test. Lower Saxony has thus in effect adopted the original Swedish 25:4 formula to give working adults access to higher education studies and, indeed, students from a working class background are well represented with 35 per cent among the students finding entry this way (as compared to 16 per cent of those holding a Abitur certificate) (8). Although this route is a unique exception so far in Germany, it must be said that in view of the difficult aptitude test and the requirements to be admitted to it, there is still no real open access policy in place as it exists in other, in particular the Anglo-saxon countries.

Even the German Distance University, which was established on the model of the British Open University, is not open as far as access is concerned. Although it is unique among German universities in the sense that studies can be pursued part-time, it requires traditional university entrance qualifications from both full-time and part-time students. It is apparent that only the most motivated and gifted adults without the academic entry qualification are likely to be able to overcome the admission barriers to higher education.

## Austria

The situation in Austria (9) represents a second stage along the continuum. Here, there is provision for applicants who have not passed the final examinations of an upper-secondary school to be accepted on the basis of an aptitude test or pre-university course. There is, however, an accompanying restrictive regulation that those who enter under these conditions must not exceed three per cent of all new entrants. The question of mature entry into higher education is thus one of quantity rather than of quality.

Two entrance procedures have thus been developed to meet the demand for wider access to university: adults who have not passed the final examinations of an upper-secondary school may be accepted for regular degree studies after having passed an aptitude test (Berufsreifeprüfung) or after having passed a university pre-entry course (Studienberechtigungsprüfung).

The law which allows adults without formal entry qualifications to enter degree courses by passing an aptitude test dates back to 1945, and was aimed at those who had been prevented by the war from passing the final upper-secondary school examinations. The quantitative impact of this alternative access route was, however, minimal. From 1945 to 1947, 130 persons applied for admission to university under the provision. Later the number of applications decreased even further. Only in 1975 did the number rise again to more than 60, and in 1981/82 there were about 350 applicants (out of a total number of new entrants to university of around 17 000). From 1945 to 1979 the total number of applicants to the aptitude test amounted to 1 292 of which only 311 were applications from women.

Requirements for admission to the test, which is administered by the universities, are: minimum age of 25; Austrian citizenship; existence of obstacles which prevented the applicant from taking a final upper-secondary school examination; work experience or successful private studies in the field which the applicant intends to study; and certification of a specialist on the candidate's specialised knowledge.

The preparation of the test is not regulated. It is composed of a general examination (an essay on a general topic and oral exams in Austrian history and geography) and an examination in a special subject (essay and oral exams). Should the applicant fail the general examination he/she is allowed to sit it a second time. The successful candidate is accepted to degree courses in the field of his or her specialisation.

Because of the very limited quantitative impact of the above regulation, a law providing an alternative method of entry to degree courses for mature students was enacted in 1976 (Bundesgesetz über die Vorbereitungslehrgänge für die Studienberechtigungsprüfung). The law provides for the organisation of preparatory courses for mature entrants to university who did not pass the final exam of the upper-secondary school. This provision of a more flexible entrance procedure is experimental and therefore limited to ten years in order to gain information and experience for a more comprehensive regulation to be enacted later.

Admission requirements for preparatory courses are: minimum age of 24; Austrian citizenship (with exceptions); and the passing of an entry test. A course takes ten months and prepares for a special field of study.

Most of the courses qualify for a number of degree study courses, for which the mature student is accepted after having successfully passed an examination at the end of the course covering the subjects studied.

In overall terms, this experimental access route has also had only a slight quantitative impact. From 1978 to 1982 some 20 preparatory courses were organised at different universities. Of the 1 250 applicants during this period only 573 were admitted and only 275 did pass their university entrance exam at the end of the preparatory course.

Most of the unsuccessful students did not fail the examination at the end of the pre-entry courses, but were dropouts. Since pursuing a pre-entry course takes a considerable commitment in time, it is little wonder that a rather large number of mature students with multiple responsibilities (job, family) cannot cope with the stress.

## France

France is another example of a country which has an alternative form of examination for older applicants to higher education who do not possess academic entry qualifications. This special entry exam (*examen spécial d'entrée à l'université -- ESEU*) is a highly structured process which allows no credit for previous work experience.

The *ESEU* is administered by all French universities with the exception of the two which do not require academic entry qualifications, i.e. Vincennes and Compiègne (see below). *ESEU* candidates who can be of French or foreign nationality must either be 20 years of age and possess a minimum of two years' work experience, or be 24 years and over. There are two types of exams depending on the intended field of study, namely one for humanities and social science, including law and economics (which is the choice of about three-quarters of the candidates) and another aiming at natural sciences, including medical and dental studies. This special entrance exam is considered as an equivalent of the *baccalauréat* as it gives access not only to universities but also to other study and training programmes of a more professional orientation for which the upper-secondary school diploma is a prerequisite.

A good number of universities, although not all, offer preparatory courses, some of them in collaboration either with the National Centre for Correspondence Studies (*Centre national d'enseignement par correspondance -- CNEC*) or with certain second degree institutions (*groupement d'établissements du second degré -- GRETA*). The *ESEU* can also be taken by amassing up to 80 per cent of the point score in the form of course credits (*unités de valeur capitalisables*) while the remainder must be acquired by sitting the final exam.

As to its quantitative importance, there were some 6 500 candidates in 1980/81 (up from 2 750 in 1971/72) of whom the majority (58.5 per cent) were 25 years and older. Unlike Austria, where only about one-quarter of the applicants for the aptitude test were women, just over half of those who took the *ESEU* in France in 1980/81 were women.

Besides the special university entrance examination there are some other routes of access for adults without a baccalauréat or equivalent to higher education. Work experience is the prerequisite for enrolling for part-time studies at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM). There studies can be pursued at the mother institution in Paris, in one of its 50 regional centres all over the country, or by correspondence, and the successful completion of these leads to engineering degrees. Degrees are earned by amassing course credits and since most of the students are working full-time, it usually takes considerable time and effort to complete the degree. This is underlined by the fact that fewer than 2 000 degrees were awarded in 1981/82 (out of 76 000 students who were enrolled).

First Cycle Engineering degrees (Diplôme universitaire de technologie -- DUT) can also be obtained from University Institutes of Technology (IUT) which admit students for part-time studies either on the basis of a baccalauréat or of a special entrance exam, in addition to, in both cases, three years' work experience. In addition, a number of engineering schools offer advanced engineering degrees for those holding a DUT, again on the basis of three years' work experience in case proper access credentials are lacking.

### United Kingdom

The situation in the United Kingdom (10) combines a variety of different approaches to access of mature students to higher education, which taken as a whole would appear to present the prospective adult student with a wider range of options, and hence represent another stage towards a more open access situation. Most individual institutions of higher education allow room for discretion in the case of mature applicants. Furthermore, several pilot schemes have been instituted to foster easier access for "unqualified" mature applicants. Public sector higher education institutions have been particularly in the fore in this respect. The approach of the Open University, where no formal qualifications are required on entry, is the most radical of all.

In general, minimum entry requirements for degree level courses are five General Certificate of Education (GCE) passes, including two at Advanced level ("A" level). In Scotland, the equivalent requirement is five Scottish Certificates of Education (SCE) passes including three at Higher Grade. These represent the most common entry routes to degree level courses but certain other qualifications are also accepted as part of the normal access route -- for example, Ordinary National Certificate/Diploma (ONC/D) at a good standard and certain City and Guilds Final Technicians Certificates. In recent years, approximately 90 per cent of all full-time undergraduates in universities entered with at least two "A" levels while about 80 per cent in the public sector in similar courses had these qualifications. In the public sector, however, entrants to higher level courses other than degree programmes were far less likely to have come through this route, this trend being even more pronounced for part-time courses.

Within this dominant framework there is, however, room for flexibility, particularly in the case of mature applicants. The Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), the validating body for public sector higher education, for example, points out that "while the normal entry qualifications may be one of the best available indications of academic potential among school-leavers, they are not necessarily an appropriate measure of the ability of mature students aged 21 or over". Most universities also allow room for discretion in the case of special groups of applicants such as mature students.

Figures based on the entry qualifications of new enrolments at universities in 1979 show that while over 90 per cent of those under 21 had GCE "A" levels, this dropped to about 66 per cent of those aged 21-25, to 45 per cent for those aged 25-39, and to 31 per cent for those aged 40 or over. The reverse trend occurs for those who hold an unspecified "other United Kingdom qualification".

Although, as has been pointed out, individual institutions have the discretion and power to accept mature students on whatever basis they choose to establish, several formal schemes have been instituted with the specific objective of providing more systematic methods of assessing mature student applicants. One such scheme, called the Open College project, involves a number of Colleges of Further Education, a Polytechnic and a University in the particular geographic area of the North-West of England. Special course units are undertaken at any of the Colleges of Further Education, and the students are assessed by course work rather than exams. The intention is to offer an adult alternative to GCE "A" levels, and the work is accepted as such by the institutions of higher education involved in the scheme.

Similar relationships between local colleges of further education and higher education are emerging all the time, although, in general, polytechnics are more to the forefront in such schemes than the universities. These preparatory courses usually take the form of "Return to Study" courses, "Fresh Horizons" or "New Opportunities for Women" courses. There appear to be two problems about such schemes from the students' point of view. First, the links are often with a limited number of departments within the institution of higher education and thus do not open the way to all areas of study. Second, while the preparatory courses may be accepted by institutions other than the one with which it is directly linked, there is no guarantee of this should the student desire to go elsewhere.

An example of a scheme which has been in operation for many years is the Northern Universities Joint Matriculation Board Scheme for Mature Entry. Five universities are involved in the scheme which provides a special test which is "of a nature suitable for mature candidates who may have very different educational backgrounds". Other universities, for example Sussex, have established similar schemes of their own, which generally include an essay, an oral examination, a general paper and special subject questions.

An important variation of the pattern described above is provided by Birkbeck College of London University. It may enrol an unqualified mature student provisionally for the first year. If the student is successful in the first year he or she may then continue to the degree programme.

It is the Open University which has adopted the most radical approach to mature student admissions. No formal qualifications are required on entry and while quotas are applied based on regional regulations, courses of study and students' occupations, the method of accepting students is essentially "first come, first served". The Open University plays a further role in increasing access generally as Open University credits can be used as the basis for entering conventional higher education establishments.

While this brief review does indicate some willingness to accept "unconventional" entry qualifications as the basis for mature student entry to higher education, there has been concern about fairly high failure rates in more traditional schemes which raised the question of the chances of mature applicants who have no formal qualifications whatsoever. As a result, in more recent years, a variety of more flexible admission rules have emerged.

This latter point emphasizes a fundamental problem about so-called "alternative" entry routes for adults which is implicit in the schemes of all the countries reviewed so far. In many cases -- particularly those based on examinations -- the requirements are not very different from those of conventional school-leaving qualifications, and thus adults face the same difficulties meeting them.

## Canada

The situation in Canada is characterised by the fact that individual universities and institutions of higher education exercise a good deal of discretion in accepting mature applicants without traditional qualifications.

Generally speaking, students are admitted to university upon obtaining a secondary school-leaving certificate or upon completion of twelve years of school (thirteen in Quebec and Ontario). However, according to a report by the Association of Universities and Colleges, "most universities are flexible about admitting to first-degree programmes, usually those in arts and science, persons with unconventional patterns of previous schooling, provided that they have been out of school for a number of years and can show promise of success in university. The most common requirement for this kind of 'mature matriculation' is that applicants must be at least 21 years of age and have been away from full-time schooling for two or more years. They may be asked to take some tests and to provide letters of reference and, if they are admitted, it is likely to be on probation. ... And some universities waive normal admission requirements for senior citizens." (11).

According to a 1980 Canadian report submitted, 34 universities recognised "mature student" status for purposes of admission at that time. Moreover, a number of universities offer remedial courses (usually of one year's duration) to prepare for university entrance those adults who have not completed their secondary schooling.

Nevertheless, the Canadian survey report suggests that despite slow but sustained progress over the past few years, much remains to be done to facilitate university access for adults who do not meet the usual admission requirement and there are still many instances where adults have difficulty gaining admission to degree programmes as "regular" students.

Institutions providing education at a distance (educational television or communications networks such as the Knowledge Network in British Columbia, ACCESS in Alberta, TV Ontario and Radio-Québec, or universities providing remote teaching, like the Open Learning Institute in British Columbia, Athabasca University in Alberta, and the Télé-université in Québec) apply very flexible admission rules to the activities they have developed. These rules ensure broader access to higher education and to university degrees.

The two remaining examples to be considered here, that of Sweden and the United States, certainly represent the most open systems in terms of access for adults to higher education.

**Sweden**

Taking the case of Sweden first, the 1975 Higher Education Act and subsequent reform of 1977 laid down that all subsequent planning of the education system was to be based on a model of recurrent education. It provided an explicit recognition of the value of previous work experience under the so-called "25:4 qualification". This means that one way of obtaining general eligibility for entry into higher education is to have four years' work experience and to be over 25 years of age. It is important to note that "work experience" is interpreted widely and encompasses child care and military service. It must be emphasized, however, that while this regulation simply gives general eligibility for adults, entry to certain courses may also require specific subject knowledge, which often means the equivalent of upper secondary school knowledge of certain subjects. Thus, just as in the British case, a note of caution needs to be raised about describing even schemes such as the Swedish 25:4 scheme as genuinely open (12).

It is interesting to note here that, unlike the case of the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, the prospective student in Sweden does not apply primarily to a university or a college but to one or more study programmes or single courses. Once a student has been admitted to a programme there is no assessment of his subject knowledge or study skill. On a voluntary basis, adult applicants can take a general aptitude test (hogskoleprovet), which is not, however, related to any specific subject. In relation to the admission process for the 25:4 scheme, information is gathered from three sources. Firstly, the adult student can get up to 1.7 points for work experience. Secondly, he or she will earn up to 2.0 points for the aptitude test. And, thirdly, the student has to meet requirements of specific subject knowledge in many general study programmes and some separate courses. Thus, the Swedish system, because of these specific entrance requirements, is not quite as open as one tends to believe. Further, it is evident that most 25:4 scheme students aiming at general study programmes with selected admission have to take the aptitude test in order to reach the necessary point score.

**United States**

Unlike Sweden where students apply for a particular course of study, in the United States they apply to a specific university or college. As can be expected from a highly diversified sector of higher education, admission rules vary widely. Generally speaking, however, access of adult students is relatively open and flexible, particularly in comparison with European systems. Thus, although a major survey of the admissions policies of higher education institutions shows a continuing use of high school degree or its equivalent or achievement test scores, a large proportion of institutions are willing to waive these requirements for adults (cf. Table II.7). While 88 per cent of all institutions require high school graduation, 30 per cent are ready to waive this requirement for adults. Seventy per cent require admissions test scores, but at over half of the institutions adults are not required to submit scores. Not astonishingly, two-year institutions, i.e. institutions that are less academically and more vocationally oriented, were least likely to require credentials and most likely to make exceptions for adults.

Table II.7

ADMISSIONS PRACTICES IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES (1978/79)

| Credential | Percentage of Institutions Requiring of All or Some Applicants: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All Institutions | Public Four-Year | Public Two-Year | Private Four-Year | Private Two-Year |
| Evidence of high school graduation or GED (1) | 88 | 95 | 81 | 89 | 93 |
| Waived for adults or not required | 30 | 21 | 48 | 24 | 15 |
| Admissions test scores such as ACT or SAT | 70 | 90 | 32 | 84 | 64 |
| Waived for adults or not required | 55 | 38 | 76 | 50 | 57 |
| Portfolio, statement, audition to document prior work | 23 | 28 | 16 | 26 | 19 |
| Letters of recommendation | 39 | 24 | 17 | 60 | 49 |
| Interviews with admissions staff, faculty | 32 | 29 | 37 | 30 | 40 |
| Personal essay or statement | 25 | 17 | 9 | 40 | 15 |
| EXCEPTIONS FOR ADULTS | | | | | |
| Adults as share of exceptions granted | 10 | 12 | 45 | 12 | 25 |

1. The GED is awarded to those who successfully pass an examination of competencies expected of high school graduates. The credential is widely recognised as equivalent to a high school degree.

*Source*: AACRAO/College Board, Undergraduate Admissions, 1980 (Tables 31, 42, 44). Compiled by Wagner, *op. cit.*

Have these practices been effective in promoting the participation of adults in higher education? The American survey report suggests that evidence is simply not clear and points out that although the large numbers of adults enrolled at two-year colleges can be attributed, in part, to a more open admissions policy, these institutions also tend to provide classes at low cost, at convenient times, and at locations near to the work sites or homes of participants (13).

This assessment underlines the difficulty already mentioned of singling out any one factor that has by itself had an impact on the participation of mature students and reinforces the view that it is a variety of factors that work together in creating the conditions in which adults see fit to embark on degree studies. However relative, it is clear that admission policies do have a highly important role in either facilitating or impeding adult participation.

## b) Types of courses and institutions attended by mature students

It is of considerable interest to know how mature students compare with conventional students in relation to the types of courses they choose and the kinds of institutions they are most likely to attend. This pattern is essentially the result of the interaction of two factors. On the one hand, there is the motivation and the interests of the mature students themselves, on the other, there is the response of the institutions. The country surveys reveal considerable agreement that, firstly, adult students tend to be mainly interested in shorter and more vocational courses than conventional students, and, secondly, that it tends to be the somewhat less elite institutions and less prestigious subject areas which appear to be the most receptive to new groups of non-traditional students.

One of the difficulties in exploring this area is again the overlap between degree programmes and continuing education in higher education. Not only are adults in all countries far more likely to participate in the shorter vocational courses but much of what they undertake does not lead to any award or qualification. To take the United States as an example, those 25 years of age or older account for 12 per cent only of all full-time collegiate enrolments, but up to 80 per cent of part-time, non-degree enrolments at institutions of higher education.

Similarly, the "adultification" of the higher education system in Sweden seems to be largely the result of adults participating in separate courses rather than full degree-oriented programmes (14).

### Institutions

While it is difficult to resolve the extent to which the distribution of mature students is based on mature student choice or on institutional response, the pattern from all countries is that mature students are, to a greater or lesser extent, more likely to be found in newer, shorter-cycle, more vocationally oriented, and in some cases less prestigious, institutions. Thus, for example in Germany, "mature" students are over-represented at three-year technical colleges, or polytechnics, (*Fachhochschulen*) that are more practice-oriented, and under-represented at universities when compared with the enrolment pattern of traditional age students. This is partly due to the fact that entrance qualifications for polytechnics include having certificates from technical and vocational high schools, the curricula of which concentrate more on vocationally-oriented rather than academic subjects.

Likewise, in Britain, apart from the Open University, mature students are more likely to be found at polytechnics than at universities. In terms of the binary divide this would suggest that, as in the German case, mature students are themselves more interested in vocationally oriented courses. However, this would be to deny the important distinctions in institutional responses to mature student needs. The evidence is that in fact the polytechnics are more open to adults than most universities, both in terms of flexibility of entry requirements and of availability of part-time study options. Furthermore, in relation to the universities themselves, there are considerable individual variations in the proportion of mature students to be found in undergraduate courses. In 1979, this varied from a low of about two per cent up to about 16 per cent, with the older more prestigious institutions tending to be clustered at the low end of the scale.

In the United States, Community Colleges have generally played an important role in enlarging higher educational opportunities for all sectors of society. As Table II.7 shows, it has tended to be the shorter cycle public institutions which have applied the most flexible entry policies for adults. For example, evidence of high school graduation or equivalent was waived for adults in 48 per cent of public two-year institutions compared to 21 per cent of four-year institutions. Policies such as these, and the availability of flexible and part-time modes of study, are reflected in enrolment figures: while undergraduate enrolments grew by 11 per cent over the 1978 to 1983 period, adult enrolments in undergraduate programmes increased by 13 per cent overall, and by 27 per cent at community colleges.

### Courses

While it is commonly assumed that it is for vocational interests that the majorities of adults turn to courses of a higher education standard, the actual evidence for degree studies is not always quite so clearcut. From the country reports, it appears that adult students are more likely to opt for the humanities or the social sciences than for scientific and technical subjects.

Table II.8(a) presents the field of study of British students who were awarded a place at universities in 1981 by age group. It is apparent that young applicants were twice as likely as older applicants to enter scientific studies (50 per cent and 24 per cent respectively) while older applicants tended to opt in greater numbers for the social sciences (42 per cent including business and professional subjects) and the arts (33 per cent).

This trend would appear to be confirmed in France where the figures for those taking the same special university entry exam (ESEU) show that, in 1980, while 4 896 opted for Exam A, which covers the humanities, economics and legal studies, only 1 569 opted for Exam B, which covers scientific, medical and para-medical subjects.

The figures from Sweden provide somewhat more detailed evidence. The median age of newly enrolled students gives some indication of the presence of mature students in particular degree programmes. Using this as a rough guide, it would appear that older students are to be found in diminishing proportions in the following courses -- firstly, medical and paramedical, secondly, education, and thirdly, culture and information. The two areas with the lowest proportion are technical occupations and administrative, economic and social occupations.

Table II.8(a)

FIELD OF STUDY OF STUDENTS ACCEPTED FOR UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE IN BRITAIN BY AGE GROUP (1981) (1)

| Field of Study | Percentages | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Under 21 | 21-24 | 25+ |
| Science and related subjects | 50 | 46 | 24 |
| Social sciences (including business and professional subjects) | 27 | 33 | 42 |
| Arts subjects | 23 | 21 | 33 |

1. British (home) students only.

Source: Mature Students Research Project, Department of Education and Science, unpublished tabulations.

As already mentioned, the category of part-time students represents to a large extent mature students. Table II.8(b) shows the percentage of part-time students in the various subject areas in institutions of higher education in Canada. The contrast between education, the social sciences and humanities, on the one hand, and the scientific subjects, on the other, is striking. In the case of the former group of subjects, from one-third to almost one-half of all students are part-time, while in the case of science-based subjects, mathematics and the health professions have the highest proportions at only 16 per cent and 17 per cent respectively.

These trends are certainly very interesting in the light of the debate about the need for greater technical and scientific education. Unfortunately, none of the country reports venture to suggest whether this pattern is a result of the relative lack of interest of adult students in scientific subjects, or whether on the other hand, it is these departments that are slower to respond to requests from non-traditional students than, for example, social science and arts departments. In fact, the latter explanation is supported by the Canadian report where scientific disciplines are found less accessible through part-time study options.

Another area where data unfortunately are not sufficiently detailed is on the sex distribution of mature students across different subject areas. One of the distinguishing characteristics of conventional enrolments in higher education is the extent to which women students are overwhelmingly concentrated in the social sciences, arts and education, and very under-represented in the scientific and technical subjects (15). Though not conclusive, it is interesting to note that this is in fact very similar to the pattern of total mature student distribution across subject areas. From the evidence emanating from the country studies, it thus appears that mature women students are not breaking down sex-based subject barriers and making entry into traditional male preserves.

Table II.8 (b)

PERCENTAGE OF PART-TIME STUDENTS IN DIFFERENT SUBJECT AREAS
IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN CANADA (1983/84)

| Subject Area | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Education | 41.2 |
| Social Sciences | 36.0 |
| Humanities | 31.7 |
| Fine Arts | 28.1 |
| Health Professions | 21.2 |
| Mathematics/Physical Sciences | 28.6 |
| Agriculture/Biological Sciences | 9.5 |
| Applied Sciences/Engineering | 8.7 |
| Other Courses | 55.8 |
| Total Part-time | 38.1 |

Source: Paquet, op. cit. Table 8.

### c) Part-time modes of study

While the country surveys reveal considerable variation in the provision of part-time study opportunities in higher education, there is no doubt that this is the method best suited to the realities of adult working, family and social life. The catch-all phrase of "part-time study" covers a wide variety of forms of attendance, for example, evening courses, part-time day courses, week-end courses, summer courses, etc. It also covers distance education methods, which under the impact of new information and telecommunication technologies, are obtaining increasing attention and will be considered separately.

For adults, there are several clear advantages in part-time modes of study which essentially arise from the fact that the individual is not forced to commit the level of time that being a full-time student involves. Instead of being forced into an "either or" choice in relation to work (or family responsibilities), the part-time adult student can continue these activities with the undertaking of degree-level studies. Besides this advantage of widening rather than narrowing choices for the individual, part-time study offers particular benefits for those in employment. Firstly, it means that the adult students can continue to earn an income while studying, thus alleviating many of the financial difficulties they would otherwise have to face. Secondly, in times of economic and employment difficulties, job security is a priority for many people and while leave of absence is sometimes available, most adults would actually have to give up their jobs in order to study full-time, with the concomitant risk that they may find it difficult to re-enter the workforce on completion of their degree programme. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that where data is available it shows that part-time adult students are far more likely to be in some form of employment than those who are full-time students. In Canada, for example, in 1978 89 per cent of those studying part-time were in employment, compared to only one third of those studying full-time. In the United States in 1981-82, 83 per cent of adult students enrolled part-time were in paid employment and even 53 per cent of those enrolled full-time held a job. In the United Kingdom survey data showed that 75 per cent of those taking Open University degree courses were employed compared to 26 per cent mature students at universities (the majority of whom should have been full-time students).

It is important to note here that parallel to the increase in interest in part-time degree level study, there has been a remarkable increase in part-time work opportunities. Over the period 1973-83 the contribution of part-time work to employment growth exceeded that of full-time employment in OECD countries (16). While part-time work has traditionally been associated with lower grade, lower skilled work, there is some evidence that this may be changing, as new working practices are being introduced at all levels of the labour market which include part-time work, flexi-time, work-sharing, sabbaticals, unpaid leave, etc. Besides offering greater flexibility to individuals in terms of the organisation of their lives, the move towards part-time work offers the potential of redistributing the available work amongst a wider section of the population.

In terms of the organisation of part-time study in higher education, the country studies reveal several different models. One case is where a special institution is established catering exclusively or mainly for part-time students. Usually this will be a distance education institution, although in the UK for example, there is a college of London University (Birkbeck) which is fully geared towards the provision of face-to-face part-time tuition. A second model is where an institution provides part-time degree courses alongside, but separate from, conventional full-time courses. In the third model, there is no clear distinction between full-time and part-time provisions with the latter forming an integral part of the former.

The Swedish situation represents a good example of this last category of an integrated provision where the distinction between full-time and part-time status has been essentially abolished. The same course can serve either as part of a full-time degree programme, or as a part-time degree programme, or as a single continuing education course, depending on the motivation of the individual student.

Continuing with the United Kingdom, it is clear also that older students are far more likely to study part-time. In 1980/81, excluding the Open University where part-time distance study is the rule, 57 per cent of those aged 25 or over in advanced courses in universities, polytechnics and other public sector colleges attended part-time, compared to 18 per cent of those under 25. These figures actually disguise very significant institutional differences, in particular, between the universities and polytechnics. In all, only eleven out of 44 universities have part-time degrees in subjects other than education. In contrast, all polytechnics offer at least one degree part-time, and in 1980 one polytechnic offered up to 18 part-time degrees. In some cases, the courses are specially designed for part-time students, in others they have opened conventional under-graduate courses to part-time students, who attend along with full-time students.

It has already been mentioned that a total of 38 per cent of students in higher education courses in Canada studied part-time, and it appears that about three-quarters of these are estimated to be students 25 years and above, while older students account only for about ten per cent of full-time students.

While once again we cannot assume mono-causal relationships between the availability of part-time study modes and adult participation, it is interesting nevertheless to note the extreme contrast between the situation in Germany (with one of the lowest proportions of mature students) and that in the United States (with one of the highest proportions). In Germany, there is no provision to enrol for degree studies on a part-time basis, with the sole exception of the Distance University at Hagen where students can choose between full-time and half-time distance study (17).

By contrast, in the United States a wealth of attendance options is available at conventional universities and colleges. Non-traditional attendance options, such as evening, weekend, or summer scheduling, correspondence and television courses (distance study), part-time study, and off-campus class sites, provide a flexible delivery of instruction. As shown in Table II.9 many existing and newly-developed institutions are providing one or more of these options.

First, more than half of the colleges and universities offer degree credit courses during the summer, in the evenings, or on weekends. At the lower (associate degree) level, 92 per cent of two-year colleges schedule classes in the summer, in the evening or on weekends. Summer sessions are held by more than half of the higher education institutions, and evening or weekend programmes leading to an advanced (bachelor) level are scheduled by over four-fifths (84 per cent) of doctoral and comprehensive four-year colleges. In recent years, the number of institutions offering degree-credit courses at convenient times has grown, but much of the increase in these non-traditional programmes has resulted from the addition of newly recognised institutions of higher education rather than the development of non-traditional programmes at existing institutions.

## Table II.9

## INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION OFFERING NON-TRADITIONAL ATTENDANCE OPTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES (1983/84)

| Option | Percentage of Institutions Offering | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | All Institutions | Doctoral Comprehensive Four-Year | General Baccalaureate | Two-Year |
| Summer Session | | | | |
| Associate Degree | 59 | 45 | 44 | 92 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 59 | 96 | 85 | 38 |
| Evening/Weekend | | | | |
| Associate Degree | 55 | 42 | 38 | 92 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 54 | 84 | 70 | 42 |
| Weekend College Programme | 16 | 26 | 16 | 11 |
| External Degree Programme | 19 | 29 | 14 | 17 |
| Correspondence | 10 | | | |
| Part-time Study | | | | |
| To meet all of degree requirements | 68 | | | |
| Off-campus Sites | 21 | | | |

Source: Wagner, *op. cit.* Table 11.

Second, somewhat smaller numbers of institutions offer degree-credit instruction away from the main campus. Already some ten years ago, one-fifth of higher education institutions offered classes in community centres, local schools, churches, libraries, museums, or at work sites. By 1983, fuelled by adult demand and public policy pressure, the share of institutions offering degree-credit classes off-campus has progressively increased. Although barely ten per cent of colleges and universities have sizeable home study, or correspondence programmes, these too are growing.

Have the non-traditional attendance options in the United States encouraged adult enrolments in higher education? Information from a variety of sources suggests the answer is yes. Large numbers of adults enrol in evening and correspondence classes, providing some casual evidence of the effects of the scheduling and location of classes. More detailed analytical studies continue to show the sizeable independent effects of distance to class site on the enrolment of adults (18).

d) Distance method of study

Apart from the question of time, problems of distance constitute particularly important barriers to adult particiation. Even adults in metropolitan areas find it hard to regularily join campus-based classes, and for people living in more remote areas not served by higher education institutions, bridging the distance is often impossible.

Correspondence courses, television and radio programmes, etc., have been developed to bridge the distance and to reach off-campus students, most of them adults, although successful distance provision has, on the whole, remained relatively marginal in the past. However, with the development of increasingly sophisticated information and telecommunication technologies and their penetration and accessibility, this is likely to change and distance education might become much more central than before. While some of the issues that are raised by this development for the contents and methodology of higher education and learning will be addressed below in more detail (Chapter IV), in this section only a short overview will be given about the place of distance higher education with respect to adult participation.

There is ample evidence that virtually all countries have been, or presently are, developing some form of distance higher education. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp" -- this motto of the Memorial University of Newfoundland has been successfully put into practice and distance higher education has become not only an accepted form of learning for an academic degree but has also been the source of a number of innovations that have begun to influence the provision of higher education as a whole -- or are likely to do so in the future.

Two main organisational patterns can be observed regarding higher education provided at a distance, namely specialised distance education departments of traditional universities and autonomous distance teaching universities. The model of a single purpose institution in Europe is the Open University in the United Kingdom (OU-UK) established in 1969 which served as a model for similar institutions which were created within and outside the OECD family of countries, including Spain (1972), Germany (1974), the Netherlands (1984), and Japan (1985). All of these institutions (with the exception of the Japanese University of the Air) operate nationwide and, in fact, have started transgressing national boundaries. Thus, for example, the Distance University at Hagen (of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia), Germany, not only serves students from the other States, but also serves students from Austria and Switzerland, while study programmes of the Dutch Open University (OU-NL) are accessible to students from neighbouring Belgium.

The principal aim of these autonomous institutions is threefold:

-- To provide opportunities at the higher education level to all those who are unable to take advantage of them within existing institutions, in particular adults with work or family obligations and/or in remote areas;

-- More generally, to extend existing opportunities for higher education for all students including the traditional age group;

-- To provide non-degree higher education courses (not leading to a degree) to a broader public, including professionals who wish to update or enlarge their professional knowledge and skills (continuing education).

The Nordic countries, Australia and New Zealand, have chosen to develop distance provision within existing institutions of higher education rather than create new single purpose establishments. The reasons for this decision were manifold, the most important being the relatively small size of target groups (a consideration that would have applied for the Netherlands as well), the costs for a large scale centralised operation, the assumed greater flexibility of a decentralised system due to short feed-back loops and, in the case of Australia, not least decisive were unresolved constitutional issues of jurisdiction between the states and the federal government (19).

In Japan, distance education at the higher education level has developed as attached to existing universities and other higher education institutions. These institutions have correspondence education courses aimed at acquisition of vocational qualifications such as teacher licenses, as well as those leading to regular academic qualifications.

In addition to these traditional courses of distance education, a University of the Air was established in 1983 as an independent university which provides higher education by means of radio, television and other media. It admitted its first entrants (17 000) in 1985. The University of the Air, at this stage, serves only the metropolitan area of Tokyo and several neighbouring prefectures, but its catchment area will be expanded.

The United States and Canada have also followed the decentralised pattern, partly because the establishment, operation and accreditation of higher education institutions is, like in Australia, a matter for the states/provinces to regulate, and partly because of the great variety of existing institutions, many of which have a long-standing tradition of serving adult students. But it is not only, or not even in the majority of cases, individual existing institutions that are involved in serving students at a distance; distance programmes are often developed and distributed through consortia or other forms of collaborative relationships between educational institutions or between institutions and non-academic bodies such as businesses, trade unions, foundations, or television and radio networks.

In assessing the role of distance higher education for the group we are concerned with, adult degree-seeking students, it must be recognised that this mode of provision has increased considerably in importance over the last two decades and will probably continue to grow as new interactive communication technologies become less costly and thus more accessible. Compared to the traditional mode of participation however, distance higher education is still marginal. Thus the OU-UK had around 108 000 students enrolled in 1984 of whom 67 000 were undergraduate students, 600 postgraduate students and approximately 40 000 enrolled as associate students in courses offered by the Centre for Continuing Education -- making the Open University the largest of the British single-institution universities. Given that in the United Kingdom some 850 000 degree-seeking students are enrolled in higher education, distance students represent fewer than eight per cent of the total student body -- even taking into account that there are a number of other institutions in the United Kingdom offering higher education courses at a distance including the universities of Birmingham, Strathclyde and Surrey.

Approximately the same order of magnitude applies to Spain (total student population 700 000, UNED 54 000) and the Netherlands (372 000 versus 25 000 enrolled in OU-NL). The OU-NL figures refer to students who were enrolled by the very day OU-NL went into operation on 1st September 1984. Figures are smaller in Germany where only around 24 000 out of the 1.3 million students are enrolled in the Distance University, of whom roughly 60 per cent pursue degree studies (i.e. little more than 1 per cent of the total student population). Because of the differentiated system of access and type of courses in Sweden, numbers of students served by distance education are difficult to assess there, but an informed estimate suggests that in 1983/84 roughly 10 000 students (out of 205 000) were pursuing studies from a distance (i.e. fewer than five per cent) (20). A similar difficulty concerns the quantitative assessment of participation in distance higher education in the United States, but it is estimated that around ten per cent of higher education courses were provided by this means.

Of those students pursuing degree studies at a distance, the large majority are, as can be expected, adult students, (above 25 years) and most of them are in employment and with family obligations. Thus, in 1984, 63.2 per cent of the OU-UK undergraduate students were between 25 and 40 years of age and 32 per cent above 40 years, while only less than 5 per cent were between 21 (until 1985,the lower age limit) and 25. Whether the abolition of the minimum entry age (as of 1985) will significantly change this age pattern of OU students remains to be seen. In DU (Germany) where no minimum age exists, this latter group represents 16 per cent while 66 per cent are between 25 and 38 years. At the Spanish UNED the under-25-years group represents 23 per cent of the total student body, while 66 per cent are between 25 and 40 years old (cf. Table II.10).

The majority of distance students in the main European single purpose distance universities are male, most distinctly so in the German Distance University, where three out of four students are men. Most of the student body of these universities are married (almost three quarters in the OU-UK), many of these with children (German DU: 32 per cent). Most significant for the profile of the "typical" student enrolled in distance higher education is employment status: between 77 and 87 per cent of the students at the three established institutions are employed, while the more recent Dutch OU has a relatively larger share of non-employed among its students (32 per cent) (Table II.10).

## Table II.10

### CHARACTERISTICS OF DEGREE-SECTOR STUDENTS AT FOUR EUROPEAN DISTANCE EDUCATION UNIVERSITIES (1984) *

| Category | Open University United Kingdom | UNED Spain | Distance University Germany | Open University Netherlands |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of degree students *** | 67 800 | 47 000 | 13 200 | 21 700 |
| Age (in %) | | | | |
| under 25 | 4.6 | 22 | 16 | 18.7 |
| 25-30 | 17.9 | 29 | 45 (25-31) | 25.1 |
| 31-40 | 45.3 | 37 | 24 (32-38) | 36 |
| over 40 | 32.2 | 12 | 15 (over 39) | 20.2 |
| Sex (in %) | | | | |
| male | 54.8 | 62 | 76 | 66 |
| female | 45.2 | 38 | 24 | 34 |
| Civil status (in %) | | | | |
| single ** | 25.7 (1) | 51 (1) | 46 | 33.1 |
| married ** | 72.0 | 49 | 51 | 61.7 (2) |
| Employment status (in %) | | | | |
| employed | 80.2 (3) | 71.7 | 87 | 68 |
| not employed | 19.8 | 28.3 | 11 ** | 32 |

* Or nearest year.

** Figures do not add up to 100 per cent due to incomplete data.

*** Numbers rounded.

1. Includes divorced/widowed.
2. Including living with a partner.
3. 5.1 per cent of total described as housewives with part-time work up to 20 hours per week.

In spite of their marginal quantitative importance, it is fair to say that although there has been some tradition of correspondence education in Europe and the United States, recent developments reveal a considerable expansion of distance taught higher education both throughout the OECD countries and the developing world. Although this development occurred almost simultaneously, i.e. over the last two and a half decades, and although the OU-UK has served as an example for similar institutions in other countries, developments have been by no means uniform, and important differences exist in patterns of organisation, the use of media, access to degree programmes, etc.

Most of the newly created institutions providing higher education at a distance have been established out of a concern for potential students who were kept from enrolling in the regular system by reasons of geographical location and time constraints, primarily due to work or family obligations. Some of these distance institutions have emphasized their commitment to serve non-traditional groups, in particular adults, by a variety of measures. Thus, as already mentioned, the Open University in the United Kingdom initially established a *minimum age requirement* and did not admit students below 21 years of age (a provision that has been abolished as of 1985). More common is an *open access policy*, i.e. the waiving of academic access credentials that are a prerequisite to the enrolment in traditional higher education institutions. Thus the Open Universities in the United Kingdom and in the Netherlands, as well as the Japanese University of the Air, are genuinely open to everyone and admission is basically first come, first served. Another measure is the provision by distance universities of special *preparatory or foundation courses* designed to help students without sufficient academic background to familiarise themselves with both the basics of the particular field of study chosen and the methods of academic research and teaching.

In spite of massive new technological developments recently in the field of telecommunication and computing the *media* on which most of the distance institutions are presently relying are conventional ones. Printed materials are still the principle medium, supported in some instances by television, radio or telephone communications, as well as audio cassettes. The present major role of print even applies to some of those institutions that use telecommunication to a significant extent and suggest by their name that the principal media are electronic, such as the new Japanese University of the Air. The reasons for the dominance of written materials and the marginal importance of telecommunication technologies are several, but it appears that the lack of feedback in the case of one-way television and radio programmes and the problem of costs in the case of interactive communications are important factors. However, there are important differences between countries in this matter. Thus, in contrast to distance learning institutions in Europe, North American institutions tend to rely less on correspondence text as the principal medium, than on radio, television, particularly cable television, and other audio-visual means of instruction and learning (an issue that will be expanded below in Chapter IV).

The concern for providing the opportunity for feedback and an interactive relationship between teachers and learners also lies behind the establishment of *regional learning centres* where tutors provide complementary face-to-face tuition or individual counselling and tutoring. Thus the OU-UK, OU-NL, UNED and the German Distance University (DU) provide face-to-face tuition by part-time tutors in a network of study centres spread out all over the respective country, although the net is of different density: OU-UK has presently 260 such study centres, compared to the 52 of the UNED, 24 of OU-NL (of which six in Belgium), and 38 of DU (of which two in Austria). In addition, the OU-UK offers courses in annual summer school taught to full-time or part-time academic staff. It should be noted however, that the participation in study centre based activities (i.e. mainly counselling and tutoring) is non-obligatory and students can, if they so choose, pursue their studies entirely at a distance -- with the exception of sitting written exams, which are administered through the study centres (21)(22).

### e) Credit transfer and modular courses

Just as the possibility of studying part-time at a distance/or in non-traditional modes is important for adult students, so also is the availability of modular courses and facilities for credit transfer. The existence of modular courses and credit transfer procedures is based on a recognition of the realities of adult life and facilitate the mature student's participation by increasing flexibility over a number of variables:

-- Time: By catering to students who wish to defer their studies to a later date. Without this option such students may be forced to drop out of a course if faced with competing demands on their time and energies;

-- Space: Changes in work and family circumstances frequently necessitate geographical mobility. The facility to transfer from one college to another without losing academic standing would avoid "wastage" and may encourage people to participate who otherwise would not;

-- Subject: Some students may wish to change the subject area of their chosen course of study, and again would benefit from being given credit for the work they have already undertaken.

Outlining benefits such as these is not to deny the very real difficulties involved in implementing such schemes, particularly in cases where individual institutions have considerable autonomy. There are problems not just in achieving agreement about the equivalence of courses -- but also about the validity of qualifications over time. Another important area concern is the extent to which people enrolled in modular courses actually go on to complete their full degree programme. These points will be explored through some examples from the country surveys.

It again appears that the systems of higher education that make the greatest provision for mature students in other respects also tend to be the most accommodating in relation to credit transfer possibilities. The situation in Germany, for example, consists of degree programmes which are offered as an integrated package with little flexibility among different sections. While it is possible, and in fact common, for students to change universities during the course of their studies, it is practically impossible to interrupt studies according to individual conditions and preferences, since this is possible only for two semesters at a time in most institutions and on the basis of a leave which must be granted by the university. Recognised reasons for leave are illness, preparation for a final examination, a practical work phase, studies abroad and compulsory military or civil service. Not recognised is the need to take up work in order to earn money based on the explicit presumption that there is no real need under the existing system of student support.

The situation in the United States, on the other hand, offers a total contrast, with modular courses and transferrable credit being well established aspects of the higher education system. We have already noticed that many institutions of higher education there recognise prior work and non-formal learning as entry criteria; indeed, some have gone further by awarding credit exemptions from portions of degree programmes on the basis of such previous work. There are several bodies which are involved in the promotion of ideas relating to credit transfer and attempts to establish standardised guides to credit equivalents. One example is the Office of Educational Credit (OEC, previously the Commission on Accreditation of Service Experience) which suggests credit equivalents for education and training undertaken by the Defence Forces and a variety of other organisations, such as businesses, trade unions, industries and governmental training schemes. Another approach consists of various standardised examination schemes which are not prepared by educational institutions themselves but which are generally recognised. These examinations have wide acceptability in higher education institutions for purposes of credit exemption, evidenced by the fact that over two-thirds of colleges grant credit for these nationally administered examinations -- the main one being the College Level Examinations Program (CLEP). A much smaller share, 13 per cent, award credit based on the evaluations of portfolios documenting prior learning, a method which has been advanced through the extensive programmes of the Council for the Advancement of Experimental Learning (CAEL).

This area of the accreditation of non-formal learning experience is one of the most controversial for institutions of higher education, involving considerable practical and theoretical difficulty. However, all these schemes, in particular those recognising non-college courses, would appear to be of significant benefit to adults not possessing the traditional entrance qualifications in obtaining degrees.

Most Member countries represented in the survey are currently exploring ideas about modular courses and credit transfer possibilities, but this is being done in a much more cautious way than in the United States. Here are two examples.

In the United Kingdom, while the flexibility inherent in the system of credit transfer is generally acknowledged as being of benefit to students (adults in particular), it is only being gradually introduced in a small number of higher level courses in polytechnics and universities. Qualifications provided on a modular basis by the Technician Education Council and Business Education Council are moves in this direction. So is a co-operative initiative by the Council for National Academic Awards to modularise some degree courses to be offered by polytechnics, with credit transfer to enable students to continue their studies in any part of the country. The main exception to the rule is the Open University, where the whole degree structure is based on a credit system, and where Open University credits are recognised for purposes of transferring to degree courses in conventional institutions.

The UK Department of Education and Science which has been actively encouraging the development of flexible modular approaches, has stressed the need for co-ordination to ensure that up-to-date and accurate information on opportunities for credit transfer and advance standing is disseminated to students, institutions and other interested parties. On the basis of a feasibility study commissioned by the DES, a pilot project was established in 1983 under the title of Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS) charged with developing a national data bank as a basis for correct information and efficient counselling.

A more advanced example is Sweden which, under the 1977 reform of higher education, introduced the concept of separate courses as a new way of pursuing studies, degree or non-degree, in a modular form. Such separate courses, which have not replaced but rather exist in addition to traditional study programmes, are mainly intended to cater to educational needs other than those provided for in the general educational programmes. They do this by adding to the diversity of educational opportunities, by providing different groups with the subsequent and further education they need (in accordance with the organisation and planning of recurrent education), and providing for students with a more general educational interest.

While it was intended that attendance of separate courses would lead on to full-degree programmes, evidence from the first few years suggest that so far very few students of separate courses continue for a full degree (23).

Sweden has also introduced the concept of "phased exits" which allows students to decide how far they wish to proceed along a course of study at a particular time, the intention being that ideally they can then return to the system if they wish to develop their knowledge further. The success of this idea appears to be mixed. As has been found also with the Open University in Britain among students taking courses based on modular structures, there is a tendency not to complete the full degree programme.

### f) Information and counselling

In the course of this review of some of the innovatory strategies currently being directed at making systems more responsive to the growing interest of adult students in degree level programmes, it will have become obvious that, unless there are accompanying information and guidance services, it is almost a matter of chance if a prospective student ends up attending the course which is best suited to his/her needs. A wrong choice for any student can have very serious repercussions, but for adult students it can be disastrous -- not only damaging the individual's self-esteem and motivation, but also because of its implications for their families and their relationships at work. For the institutions it is important, if their courses are to fulfil the purpose for which they were designed, that students should be aware of their scope and nature before enrolling. This, too, should reduce the likelihood of dropouts.

As non-traditional opportunities expand in higher education systems, the array of available courses, attendance options, entry criteria, etc. become increasingly complex and difficult to understand -- sometimes even for those working within the system. It is vital therefore that the prospective student is given as much support as possible in first identifying his or her own objectives and educational abilities, and then trying to match these with an appropriate study programme. Not least important in this matching process is the necessity of establishing what level of commitment, particularly in terms of time, the student is able and willing to make to his or her study programme. The danger with part-time study options especially is that students who feel they can study and continue to work consistently underestimate the level of commitment that a course at higher education level requires.

There are many different ways of providing information and advice for adults, from local schemes based in one institution to attempts to establish nationwide data banks. Essentially, three levels of advisory services emerge from the country reports. In the first, there are no specialised services for adults, and all students avail themselves of counsellors attached to individual institutions of higher education. Secondly, there are examples where mature student counsellors are provided by institutions of higher education. In the former case, it is likely the counsellor will only be consulted when a problem has arisen, whereas specialised mature student services are more likely to give guidance before the student finally decides on a programme of study. At the third level, some adult education guidance services are based more in the community at large than at an individual institution. This type of service obviously has an advantage in that it can both counsel the prospective student on the programmes available and identify the most suitable institution for their pursuit.

All institutions of higher education do, of course, issue brochures or prospectuses giving details of courses and many advertise in libraries, local press, local radio, etc. In addition, all countries have some form of student support services where students can find counselling. However, often such services do not provide the adult student with all the information and advice that are relevant to his or her particular situation.

As has been seen, the variety of opportunities open to adults seems to be more diverse in the United States and it is here that the prospective student is probably more likely to be somewhat dazed by the array than suffer from paucity of information. It certainly appears that institutions are attempting to cater explicitly to students with non-traditional attendance options. According to the United States report, the situation is likely to have improved since a 1972/73 survey when about a half of the institutions of higher education provided counselling facilities before or after evening and weekend class times. As these are the attendance options favoured by adults, it is likely that these are counselling services directed to the mature student.

However, the problem remains that by the time adults avail themselves of institutional-based counsellors, it is likely they will already have selected if not embarked on their course of study. In Sweden, there are about 400 educational counsellors attached to universities and colleges, the majority of whom are members of particular departments while a few are attached to the central administration and admission services. When recruitment was mainly directed at school-leavers, institutions knew where to direct their information. Adult students, however, are a much more diverse group and their need for information is equally diverse. Thus, prospective adult students may find the admissions system cumbersome and complicated and it is as usual the people with the most initiative, perseverance and time who manage to reach the educational counsellors.

Research on counselling problems for adults in higher education in Sweden reached conclusions which would seem to be of relevance to all countries. It is suggested that an effective information and counselling strategy must work on both short-term and long-term perspectives. Two approaches to mature student counselling were examined, one consisting of an orientation course for adults in higher education, and the other of an attempt to use a study circle as a method of adult counselling. One conclusion of this study was the growing need for adult counselling, guidance and study preparation. Another conclusion pointed to the risk of over-information to prospective adult students. If the information activities are not co-ordinated with other study support schemes, they might cause more study problems rather than result in effective participation (24).

In Britain, in 1981, the now defunct Advisory Council on Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE) published a Directory of Local Education Guidance services for adults. At that time, 40 such ventures were listed throughout the country, showing an increase from 18 in 1979. These types of local services represent an important addition to institutionally-based services which tend to deal only with mature students who have already selected a course at that institution. One of the Council's main recommendations was that such guidance services should be co-operative and collaborative ventures rather than consisting of the exclusive presence of a professional group or institution.

Three possible organisational arrangements were identified:

a) The "Link Chain" type where a directory of volunteers is maintained and an individual potential student can contact the most appropriate volunteer;

b) The "Centre" type which offers a centralised service, often with professional trained staff; and

c) The "Link Chain Centre" type which attempts to combine the positive features of both types.

Survey data on mature students in higher education in England and Wales shows what the students themselves found to be the most useful source of (a) information and (b) advice. In relation to useful sources of information, three such sources in particular mentioned: firstly, a prospectus or brochure; secondly, staff at the college; and thirdly, a student who had previously taken the course. However, some interesting institutional differences emerge -- the emphasis placed on the prospectus was significantly greater for the Open University and university students (60 per cent and 47 per cent respectively) compared to those at polytechnics (33 per cent). Students at the Open University stand out as being the only ones to give any mention of radio/television as the most useful source of information (which, although low at six per cent, represented the third highest ranking for them) (25).

In relation to what respondents found to be the most useful source of advice, again some interesting institutional differences were noted. For mature students in universities, college staff and a personal friend are the main two sources of advice (mentioned by 17 per cent and 15 per cent respectively); for those at polytechnics, work colleagues come first as a source of advice (25 per cent) with college staff second (19 per cent). In the case of Open University students, 28 per cent say a previous student was the most useful source of advice, with a prospectus coming second -- specialised adult advisory services were most likely to be mentioned by mature students at universities (five per cent).

In Canada, there are several interesting and well developed advisory schemes based on "educational brokers", who also try to offer advice both to prospective students and to other higher education institutions as to the needs of adults in the locality. In Saskatchewan, a network of community colleges was created in 1973 to provide decentralised education services, from basic education through the university level, to adults across the province. The main purpose of the community college is to co-ordinate educational services to meet the needs of adults for basic schooling, vocational training or university education. The sixteen community colleges are supported by a network of more than 300 advisory committees (volunteers), who determine the educational needs of the population. These colleges have no campuses and no teaching staff. Where possible, they use existing institutions (universities and colleges). The community college only organises required activities where identified needs cannot be met by existing institutions.

In Alberta, consortia were set up in 1980 to provide the adult population with the required services in terms of post-secondary credit courses. At the present time, there are five consortia made up of post-secondary institutions. Each consortium is assisted by a regional advisory committee (volunteers). Its function is to idenfity educational needs and ensure an appropriate response. The consortia have close ties with the further education councils who are responsible for the provision of non-credit instruction. In addition, Alberta has established a network of professional guidance centres offering individual or group counselling, aptitude and interest tests, as well as reference services on educational opportunities and student aid (26).

## Conclusion

Table II.11 summarises the main organisational policies and practices relating to mature students in degree level programmes, as revealed by the country studies. These have been arranged into a continuum ranging from the options least favourable to the interests and needs of adult students to those that offer the best facilities. While variations can exist within a country (e.g. conventional institutions relatively closed to mature students, but a single one designed to cater specially to their needs) in general, it appears that those countries with more institutions providing more flexible options in terms of admissions criteria, modes of study, credit transfer, and information and counselling facilities, will tend to be those with higher levels of adult participation in higher education.

Table II.11

SUMMARY OF ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN RELATION TO MATURE STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

| Continuum | Admissions | Mode of Study | Credit Transfer Modular Courses | Information and Counselling |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Systems or institutions of higher education least open to mature students<br>↓<br>Systems or institutions of higher education most open to mature students | No special provision -- adult students must fulfil same entry requirements as conventional students<br>↓<br>Special examinations and aptitude tests available for adults<br>↓<br>Recognition of prior work experience or non-college based education<br>↓<br>Open access on "first come, first served" basis | No provision for part-time degree study (with face-to-face tuition)<br>↓<br>Limited provision for part-time degree study on certain courses or at certain types of institutions<br>↓<br>Wide-ranging provision for part-time degree courses -- including evening, week-end, summer schools | No provision for interruption of degree programme once embarked upon<br>↓<br>Provision to take degree in modules over time at the same institution<br>↓<br>Degrees based on modular structure. Credit transfer possible between range of institutions | College-based educational guidance services oriented towards all students<br>↓<br>College-based educational guidance services oriented especially towards the needs of mature students<br>↓<br>Community-based information and advisory services oriented towards adults before they return to study, comprising a variety of educational institutions |

## 4. ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

In resolving the issues of access by adults to higher education, financial considerations are obviously of the utmost importance. Adults thinking of entering higher education must not only find the means of meeting the costs of fees and other course expenses, but also of supporting themselves, and very often dependants, for the duration of their studies.

Those in employment considering undertaking a full-time degree programme will have to weigh carefully the effects of giving up their means of livelihood.

Here we will identify some of the ways in which different countries approach this question. Finance can be considered from two perspectives: that of institutional support on the one hand, and of support for individual mature students on the other. We will concern ourselves mainly with the latter -- but first, a word concerning some of the institutional issues.

a) Institutional support

In most systems of higher education it is difficult to separate institutional financial support for adult students from that of the higher education student body at large. The situation is different when looking at particular institutions dealing specifically with mature students.

In terms of financing, probably the most common examples of specific institutions designed for degree level studies for adults are the autonomous distance teaching universities described already. Thus, to take the Open University of the United Kingdom as an example, in 1984, the state provided direct institutional support for adult students in higher education amounting to £54 million. This represents a cut in real terms by more than 5 per cent since 1980 and even more significant reductions in the level of funding (in real terms) were seen for the 1985 and 1986 budgets.

For an institution such as the Open University where fixed costs are high but marginal costs of each additional student are low, these cuts represent an even greater dilemma than for conventional universities affected by such retrenchment: if the Open University were to seek to reduce costs by reducing student members, very massive reduction would be required. If, as an alternative measure, the level of student support could be reduced, such cuts could be expected to have a negative impact on the presently high success rate, i.e. the number of students who actually obtain a degree. It would seriously impair the cost-effectiveness ratio which, as the OU is proud to point out, is very positive in comparison with conventional universities: an Open University graduate costs the tax payer little more than half the cost of a graduate of a conventional university (27).

Apart from such specific difficulties in coping with budget cuts which are the consequence of the OU's unique structure and mode of operation, it is worth noting that recent budget reductions represent relatively higher cuts than those faced by any other higher education institution in the United Kingdom (28).

The United Kingdom is not an isolated case. In Germany, the budget of the Distance University, which was DM 56.9 million in 1980 was DM 60.1 million in 1983, which represents a reduction in the level of funding in real terms of more than 10 per cent. This has led to a reduction of a number of services offered to students. In addition, since 1982, study materials are no longer free of charge and distance students are obliged to pay what actually amounts to study fees. As study fees are not charged in conventional universities, this measure represents a specific financial burden for distance, i.e. mostly working adult students. As in the case of the Open University, there may be good reasons justifying these economic measures, but the conclusion is probably fair that they can hardly be interpreted as an action taken to enhance adult participation in higher education. While no precise figures were available from the UK as to the negative impact of the budget cuts, enrolment figures from the German Distance University dropped sharply as a consequence of the introduction of fees for the study materials: where 36 638 students were enrolled in 1981, only 24 391 registered in 1982/83, a drop of almost exactly one third.

In this context it must be noted, however, that study fees and direct course expenses for study materials are not unusual features of other distance universities. Thus, e.g. the OU-UK charges £83 per credit course (a total of six credits being required for a BA degree), while a student enrolled in the Spanish UNED pays between Ptas 29 500 and 43 000 for the study year depending on the field of study chosen. The price for study material varies between Ptas 1 500 and 2 000 for six Unidades Didacticas (written course materials) and the price of an audio-cassette is Ptas 240 (29). Course fees for degree students at the new Japanese University of the Air amount to Y 93 000 annually in the standard case where a quarter of the total credit requirements for graduation (124 credits) are taken (i.e. Y 30 000 per credit). Fees per module are Gld 138 for students of the Dutch OU-NL (a course consisting of two or three modules).

What is also noteworthy about the newly introduced fees at the German DU is that they are not part of the DU's revenues but rather flow into the regular state budget of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, where the DU is located. By contrast, study fees in the case of university systems in most other countries constitute part of the institution's own revenues. Thus, UNED's 1984 budget was Ptas 2.4 billion, of which the contribution by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science was Ptas 1.2 billion, while the other half was financed by student fees and the income from the sale of the course materials (30).

The impact on adults of cuts in institutional grants for other, non-specialised institutions is very difficult to assess. Anecdotal evidence suggests that those student support services that are of particular importance to adult students are particularly affected by these reductions. The issue in this context is the cost incurred by the institutions in serving part-time students, who in their majority are adult students. In higher education systems where allocation of institutional grants is made on a per capita basis, part-time students are accounted for on the basis of a full-time equivalence formula. College and university administrators argue that while a part-time student may take only half the course work load of full-time students, their demand for support services such as guidance, counselling, and library resources, is disproportionally higher than that of full-time students and that therefore the present full-time equivalence formula does not reflect the real costs incurred by part-timers.

This argument is also the reason behind the practice whereby institutions frequently assess proportionately higher tuition and fees per credit to their part-time students than to full-time students. Thus, while institutional grants tend not to account for additional costs incurred by part-time students (by means of a full-time equivalence formula which is based on the number of courses), institutions often make part-time students pay what they deem to be the real cost by imposing relatively higher charges for part-time attendance than for full-time (31).

b) Individual student support

When looking into current policies and practice of individual student support for adult students, it must be remembered that the economic and social status of adult students, or would-be students, differs quite considerably from that of younger-age students. Often adult students are married and have children and in most cases they were, or still are, gainfully employed. For the adult student taking up studies entails not only the direct costs of study, such as study fees or materials, but also cuts in and, sometimes even a complete loss, of his or her income. These indirect costs in the form of income foregone (or opportunity cost) are necessarily higher than that of younger students. In addition, there are other indirect costs that adults may incur as a consequence of their social and family responsibilities, e.g. for day care of dependent children and the like.

There is a host of different schemes of direct or indirect support in the various Member countries. Three general patterns of policies and practice can be distinguished regarding aid for in degree studies:

-- There are specific support schemes for adult students that take account of, and make special provision for, the particular socio-economic situation of adults;

-- Student support schemes are "neutral" in the sense that they apply equally to traditional age and adult students, without making any special allowance for specific needs of older students;

-- Student aid schemes discriminate against adult students in a variety of ways ranging from upper age ceilings for study support, to the non-eligibility of part-time studies for financial aid.

Although all provisions for the various kinds of student support -- grants, loans, employer support, other private sources, tax allowance, to name only the principal ones -- can be classified according to this distinction, the overall picture of the situation in Member countries is far from clear. It is not uncommon that in a single country several support schemes follow different patterns depending on factors such as the field or the mode of study chosen. An example of this is the United Kingdom where in England and Wales study aid is given through a comprehensive grant system with two types of awards, mandatory and discretionery. Mature students are eligible for two additional allowances, one for the maintenance of dependants, and a second as an older students allowance. In 1980/81, 12 per cent of those who received full-value awards in England and Wales were categorised as "independent students", which means that they were aged 25 or over or had supported themselves financially for at least three years. However, these grants by and large apply exclusively to full-time courses only. Adults who study in a part-time mode, including the 60 000 students enrolled in undergraduate degree programmes at the Open University are not entitled to mandatory grants. Nevertheless, Local Education Authorities (LEA) may give discretionary awards to Open University students and other part-time students. Although in the past LEAs have frequently done so, the number of such discretionary awards has fallen rather drastically since 1978, reflecting the growing financial constraints encountered by the higher education sector as a whole (32).

Thus, in the United Kingdom, while on the one hand an attempt is made to meet the specific needs of older students and their dependents, on the other the financial support of part-time studies is made dependent on the discretion -- and the margin of this discretion may well be narrow in times of fiscal constraints -- of the Local Education Authorities.

A few figures are given to illustrate this situation: in 1980/81, some 380 000 students received mandatory awards for further and higher education in England and Wales; of these approximately 47 000 were "independent" students (12.3 per cent). While the majority of these students were at colleges of further or higher education, 28 per cent were enrolled in a university. 45 per cent of the independent student grant holders were women, and one-third married. Some 6 900 mature students holding mandatory awards received an additional allowance for the maintenance of dependants and almost 14 000 an additional older student grant.

The picture is more complex in the United States, in particular because of the variety of support schemes and grant or loan awarding agencies: over 2.5 million students each year alone receive cash grants or scholarships from several state or institutional sources, not counting those who receive subsidised loans.

The federal government provides most of its support to higher education through student assistance programmes. Some states, including New York and California, also allocate sizeable amounts of student aid. Adult students, however, tend to finance their educational expenses through other public and private sources.

Most of the available aid dollars are allocated according to financial need, defined as the costs of attendance (tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board and miscellaneous expenses) less a calculated contribution expected from resources available to the student. In 1983-84, the federal Pell grant and SEOG grant programmes provided $2.8 billion, state scholarship and grant programmes (including federal matching funds) accounted for an additional $1.1 billion, and institutions of higher education allocated $2.5 billion from their own available resources. While not specifically intended to exclude adults, less than one-fifth per cent of the total volume of federal grant dollars allocated to undergraduates reached students 25 years of age and older. Although the share is low it compares favourably with the overall situation: less than 15 per cent of all available grants for undergraduates are awarded to adult students.

In the large, federal Pell grant programme, some 18 per cent of recipients are adults aged 26 and over. This compares to their 26 per cent share of total first-degree enrolments. In state scholarship and grant programmes (with a 9 per cent share), and institutionally administered grants from other sources (16 per cent share), adults in higher education programmes participate in even smaller proportions.

The principal reason for the low representation of adults in grant programmes is a limitation on aid to students engaged in part-time study, the form of attendance most favoured by older students. In the Pell grant programme, grant aid allocated by institutions, including the federal SEOG dollars, very seldom goes to part-time students (and, therefore, to adults). Institutional aid policies usually rank needy full-time students ahead of needy part-time students in the queue distributing available student grant dollars.

Grant and scholarship aid provided through state student assistance programmes have typicaly excluded part-time students altogether. But, this is changing in a number of states. Twenty-three states now provide grants to part-timers. Vermont's extension of eligibility for state awards to part-time students directly benefited adults.

Of those adults who meet the attendance requirements, many do not obtain grant aid because the need analysis calculations are often based on the economic situation of traditional age students, thus not taking into account the fact that adults stand at a different stage in the life cycle and confront quite different financial demands than younger students.

Finally, in making financial aid awards from funds available to the institution, internal policies call for larger "self-help" (loans, work) expectations from, and lower grant awards to, older students. According to a recent study in New York State, about one-fourth of the institutions package aid differently for adults.

The result of these policies and practices is that adults are not only less likely to receive aid than their younger peers in college, but they also receive smaller average amounts from most of the grant and scholarship programmes. Adult aid recipients receive a 30 per cent smaller total grant amounts than the overall average.

This indicates the potential significance of loans to older students. Most important are the two federal student loan programmes, Guaranteed Student Loans (GSL) and National Direct Student Loans, which provide access to credit for low and middle income students enrolled in higher education courses. Through the GSL programme, the federal government establishes a fixed, competitive, guaranteed yield to private lenders originating the loans, and below market interest rates to students (the difference between the current market rate and the student loan rate is met by the federal government). In the NDSL programme, the federal government provides funds to institutions of higher education for lending. Within certain guidelines, the individual colleges and universities establish criteria for allocating the loan funds to needy students and for servicing the loans.

While, as indicated above, adults are under-represented as grant and aid recipients, they rely heavily on loans. Their proportionate share in the GSL programme probably exceeds the 17 per cent indicated on institutional records. More significantly, federal loans by themselves account for an estimated 40 per cent of the total amount of aid provided to adults.

Besides the loan and grant schemes, there are several other instruments of individual student support for adult students that cannot be presented here in detail. One of these consists in individual entitlements that can be applied by the bearer towards post-secondary education expenses. The best known, and quantitatively by far the most important of such schemes, are entitlements (or vouchers) under the GI-Bill. GI-Bill benefits have been provided since 1944 by the United States Government to military veterans. They are scaled for family size and attendance status and can be used up to nine years following discharge from military service. Although eligible programmes included virtually the whole range of post-secondary education and training, three-fourths of the GI-Bill recipients in the 1980s chose higher education programmes. Of these, an estimated 70 per cent were over 25 years of age in 1980 -- making this scheme the most important single financing scheme for adults in higher education. Unfortunately, eligibility was limited to former servicemen, thus exempting important groups such as women or the handicapped, and the Bill was replaced by a new programme in 1977, whose benefit levels are considerably lower (33).

Another source of individual study support, although not widely used in the United States, are employer tuition-aid programmes. Although larger numbers of adults would stand to benefit from its wider use the participation rates remain quite low. Beyond a simple lack of employee interest, some argue that restrictions on the type of eligible programmes and the provision of funds discourage their use (34).

Finally, tax deductions or exemptions need to be mentioned here. Such deductions or examples for specified education-related activities represent indirect subsidies in the form of reduced taxes for institutions, students, employers, and donors. In 1980, federal tax expenditures for higher education activities amounted to an estimated $2.8 billion, with less than a third of the total benefiting adults. State tax expenditures in the same year totalled $4.3 billion, with a like proportion supporting adults in higher education (35).

The United States system has been treated here in some detail for two reasons: first, because, as was stated in an 1978 OECD Review of Student Support Schemes, "of all the countries included in the study, the United States has the most bewildering array of student aid programmes and any attempt to summarise them briefly is bound to lead to simplification and omission"; and secondly, because the statistical data base in the United States is comparatively satisfactory.

While the former reason seems to apply likewise to Canada, the latter does not -- at least as far as adult students are concerned. As in the United States, financial responsibility for higher education funding is shared between the Federal and the Provincial governments. However, although the federal role in financing and co-ordinating student aid has grown, the system is based on the principle of sole provincial responsibility for administering student aid regardless of the source of funding. Thus, there are the quite different study assistance packages in Canada, one for each province and territory. In all provinces except Quebec, those packages include a mix of aid provided from the Federal government's Canada Student Loan Program (CSLP) and from Provincial government loan, grant and/or bursary programmes.

> "The first step in seeking assistance under all twelve aid packages is for students to apply to a provincial or territorial government for aid and provide information about their financial resources and needs. The province or territory then determines the amount of aid for which the student is eligible, based on assessed financial need, and provides that aid either as non-repayable grant or bursary (provided by provincial programmes) or as an authorisation for a guaranteed loan (either from the CSLP or a provincial loan program or both) or a mix of non-repayable and repayable aid. If the aid is in the form of an authorisation for a guaranteed loan, the student then negotiates the

> loan at a bank or other commercial lending institution. The government responsible pays interest on the loan while the student is at school and for a short period thereafter, and guarantees repayment to the lending institution." (36).

Until very recently, financial aid criteria stipulated that, in order to be eligible, students had to be full-time students carrying at least 60 per cent of a full course load. This provision was amended in 1983, making part-time students taking between 20 per cent and 59 per cent of a full course load eligible for student aid (loans) under the CSLP. However, the aid granted is not for maintenance, but "for the cost of tuition fees, books, learning materials, transportation and related expenses only", and is therefore limited to "borrowing to an outstanding principal of $2 500 at any one time". And, while repayment of the loans can take up to nine and a half years starting after studies have been completed in the case of full-time students, repayment under the part-time plan must start one month after the issuance of the loan, with 24 months to repay individual loans. Thus, while provision has been made for part-time mode of study, the conditions under which student aid is awarded to part-time students compared unfavourably to those granted to full-time students.

According to the Canadian survey, four Provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec) offer minimal bursaries to part-time students. But it is noted that these provincial assistance programmes, like the federal loan programme mentioned above, are very limited, essentially since support is calculated on the basis of the maintenance requirements for young students. This point, however, is just as valid regarding the support for adult full-time students. Thus, in 1979 the Commission of Inquiry on Educational Leave and Productivity found:

> "An adult student who would return to school full-time must suffer a substantial drop in income. Post-secondary financial support is geared to the financial needs of young family dependents. The staff of the Commission estimated that an adult man with a working wife, two children and family income of $20 000 per annum would suffer a minimum 40 per cent to 50 per cent drop in family income if he returned to school full-time even if he was able to attract the normal amount of current student support." (37).

As in the United States, tax exemptions are another important though indirect type of individual financial support. The overwhelming majority of adults combine their studies with either full-time (78 per cent) or part-time work, so that tax exemptions for educational purposes set off against the income tax increase the student's net income. Although the deductable amount seems relatively small -- students are entitled to deduct from their income $50 per month of full-time studies -- it is estimated that tax deductions claimed by students for educational purposes exceeded $100 million in 1979.

Although no exact figures are available for the quantitative dimension of the support paid by employers for their employees in terms of tuition fees, the Canadian survey suggests that this form of financial assistance is rather widespread although a recent study found that the actual number of recipients was relatively small.

As already observed, Sweden is the country that, in comparison with the other Member countries, has most vigourously promoted adult participation in higher education. While this is clearly reflected in a far-reaching reform of the admission requirements opening higher education up to adult students, the reform has been less progressive as far as financial support for adult students is concerned.

While participation in labour market training and adult education at the elementary or secondary levels is financed under two other support schemes (AMS grants and adult study assistance respectively), upper secondary and post-secondary students are financially supported under the terms of a loan/grant assistance scheme which was first introduced in 1965. As the name suggests, the scheme provides a mix of loans and grants that can be awarded to upper secondary students of 20 and above and to students of higher education. The loan/grant assistance for a student studying full-time for nine months during the academic year 1980/81 was SKr 22 500 or SKr 2 500 per month (as a rough comparison, an average industrial workers got around SKr 3 500 per month after taxes). Of this amount, 10 per cent is awarded as a grant while 90 per cent is repayable. The loan/grant assistance is means-tested. Up to 1981 the spouse's income was included in the need assessment but this was abolished on the grounds of alleged discrimination against women.

The scheme is frequently criticised as inequitable to adult students on two grounds: firstly, that the large loan component tends to discourage adults with family or other financial commitments, in particular from low-income backgrounds, and secondly, that the the size of the award is suited to young peoples' needs rather than that of adults.

> "The loan/grant system ... creates special difficulties for adults who have earned incomes because it does not cover even the loss of quite small earnings. Consequently, a person who wishes to study extensively and previously has been employed gainfully has to accept a reduced living standard. Calculations by the National Board of Statistics have indicated that a transition to full-time studies would result in a drastic increase in the number of households falling below the subsistance level." (38).

Unfortunately, there is no sufficient data base to give a full picture on how adults fare financially when participating in higher education. In total, out of the 60 000 full-time students in higher education, around 30 000 (50 per cent) received awards under the loan/grant assistance scheme, but there is no further break-down of the numbers according to the age of the recipients. The estimated total expenditure for this scheme in 1981/82 was SKr 2 672 million.

Although not a financing scheme, the Swedish law on educational leave must be mentioned here. While in most other countries where educational leave schemes exist (39), leave entitlements are far too short and infrequent for full-time participation in degree level studies, the duration of educational leave in Sweden is dependent on the length of the course or programme chosen, i.e. the law does not set forth a maximum length of leave. Unlike most educational leave schemes in other countries, the Swedish scheme does not provide for paid educational leave. Thus, the entitlement solely assures the employee the right to return to his job and to resume the status and income he had before leaving, while deflecting the question of financial support to other laws on support schemes. Thus, in the case of higher education, the worker asking his employer for educational leave would have to apply at the same time for financial support from the loan/grant assistance scheme mentioned above.

As mentioned above, Germany belongs to those countries where few specific policies are in place to enhance adult participation in degree studies. The system of individual student support and its recent development are probably the clearest examples of present policy stances vis-à-vis adults.

Here, the major source of student support is financial aid under the Federal Study Support Act of 1971 (BAFÖG), the purpose of which is to support students from a disadvantaged economic background. Students meeting the necessary criteria of need are entitled to financial support, the amount depending on the level of parental or spouse income. Support under this scheme is thus need-based and no specific academic criteria have to be met except that recipients must pass the regular intermediate exams which take place after the 4th semester of study. This financial aid, which was awarded as a grant when the scheme was first enacted and later as a mix of grant and loan components, is now awarded entirely in the form of a loan as of 1983.

With respect to adult students, the scheme has two particular features. The first consists of an age ceiling, whereby students older than 30 (originally 35) when they first enrol are ineligible for financial aid. An exception can be made and this ceiling waived if the student has acquired his entrance qualification via the "second chance" route or through special examination for admission as mentioned above, and begins his studies immediately upon acquiring this qualification. An exception can also be granted if the student has been unable to enroll earlier due to personal or family problems, in particular if he or she was kept from enrolling by raising children. The second specific feature is that income of parents is not taken into consideration if the student is over 30 years of age, or if he or she has earned his or her own living for more than five years.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned exception clause, which would remain valid even in the case of another lowering of the age ceiling, exempts "second route" adults as well as others in unusual personal circumstances that explain the late start. However, the fact that support is given in the form of a repayable loan tends to act as a particular disincentive for adults (since repayment periods are shorter). Also, the age ceiling clearly discriminates against adults who, after acquiring their academic access credentials or passing the aptitude test, have decided or have been forced to postpone their studies for other reasons.

Available data are not detailed enough to assess the size of the adult student body (as defined for the purpose of this report) currently receiving financial assistance under the federal study assistance scheme. Overall, of the 1.3 million higher education students in Germany, some 457 000 received awards in 1983 (=40.4 per cent). Of these, 188 000 (i.e. more than 40 per cent) were aged 25 and over. However, only 31 000 (6.8 per cent) of the recipients were older than 30 and 5 086 (1.1 per cent) older than 35 years of age. Out of the total number of support recipients, some 37 000 (8 per cent) were married and the average entitlement for higher education students amounted to DM 516 per month (40) -- a sum below the training allowance for young people undergoing vocational training under the German apprenticeship system. Even the maximum award (loan) which was DM 660 in 1983 (and has been raised to DM 710 as of 1986) can hardly been considered sufficient for mature students' needs, in particular when they are married and have dependent children. It is therefore not surprising that a recent survey on the social situation of students in Germany found that some 42 per cent of university students (and 37 per cent of students in polytechnics) worked at the side (either during the semester breaks or during the semesters) and that the share of older students (25 years and over) working was clearly higher (more than every second student) (41).

This raises once again the issue of the size of student support and its suitability for adults. The estimate by the Swedish NK Board of Statistics has already been mentioned, according to which a great number of households would fall below the subsistence level if they were to rely entirely on loan/grant assistance. This is so, even though the Swedish entitlement is comparatively generous (SKr 2 500 per month as compared to 3 500 representing the average net wage of an industrial worker).

Likewise, the Canadian review of student support for adults already alluded to concluded that a typical adult student who entered higher education full-time would suffer a substantial drop in income. This evidence is supported by the United Kingdom survey of mature students in higher education which, in 1980/81, found that 65 per cent of those at universities suffered a reduction of income by either giving up on earnings from full-time or part-time work and/or overtime earnings. The vast majority of these were full-time students and in receipt of the full grant awards. In contrast, the comparable figure for loss of earnings for Open University students (by definition part-time students) was only 13 per cent.

### c) Summary

Within the scope of this enquiry, it was not possible to assemble enough data to present a full and systematic analysis of the different modes of institutional and student finance as they specifically affect adults in all countries under review. With the exception of the United Kingdom, where specific mature student awards exist, there are no special financial provisions for adult students as such, and there is not a sufficient data base to assess how adults fare under general support schemes of student aid. Evidence suggests, however, that on the whole, student support, to the extent that adults are eligible at all, is neither sufficient, given the specific needs of adults, nor suited to the specific mode by which most adults tend to participate in degree programmes. This aplies in particular to the non-eligibility of part-time studies under most finance systems. Though, as shown above in the United States and Canada, recent amendments to a number of loan-awarding support schemes have included part-time studies, if only on a very limited scale. If the objective of higher education for adults was to benefit, primarily or as one among several groups, individuals from lower income groups, special attention must be given to this group with respect to finance. Obviously, it is this group which must rely exclusively, or to a large extent, on support from sources other than their own income or earnings or support by their families.

As the above review of the major schemes in some of the Member countries has shown, guaranteed and/or subsidised loans are the primary instrument of student support, a notable exception being the United Kingdom, where, however, the introduction of loans has also been under discussion. For young people at the outset of their professional career, a major loan to pay for higher education appears to be a sound financial risk, both for the student and the money-lending institution. In the case of adults, in particular older ones, this risk is considerably higher as the period over which the loan needs to be repaid is shorter. Also, in terms of economic cost benefit analysis, student loans seem to be more problematic in the case of adults as the time over which additional benefits accrue from the investment in education (in the form of salary differentials) is shorter than in the case of traditional age students (42). Thus, it is frequently argued that student loans are particularly ill-fitted to the situation of adults generally and that the prospect of a major endebtment tends to act as a particular disincentive to potential adult students from low-income backgrounds. Although evidence from the US seems to prove the contrary -- while loans represent only 29 per cent of student aid for traditional age students, the adult share was above 40 per cent -- this can be explained by the fact that other forms of support are not sufficiently available for adults and that therefore loans remain an important source of financing higher education students.

Adults from low-income background are also disadvantaged with respect to a number of other modes of financing. Tax relief schemes benefit those with the highest incomes while low earners will derive less benefit, and those not in gainful employment are totally excluded. Of course, the same is also true for the latter group as far as tuition aid from employers are concerned.

Most detrimental for unemployed persons is the rule in almost all Member countries that recipients of unemployment benefits loose their benefits if they participate in full-time degree studies. Since part-time study is not available in a number of countries, this means that unemployed adults face the difficult choice between sitting idle with benefits or acquiring new skills or refreshing obsolete ones which eventually will make them attractive for employers -- but at the cost of their unemployment benefits. Likewise, in most countries, public funds set aside for labour market training can ordinarily not be used for higher education purposes -- a provision that makes little sense in times when higher education is assuming an increasingly important role in continuing professional education (43), a development that will be dealt with in the following chapter.

It would not be appropriate to conclude from this summary assessment that adults are, in principle or intentionally, discriminated against as far as finance is concerned. Nevertheless, there are policies in place, such as age ceilings limiting eligibility for student aid to younger-age students, that would seem to justify such a conclusion. Generally speaking, the following observation of the Austrian survey report seems to apply to most systems of student finance: "The Austrian grant system does not discriminate against adult students; it does not however take into account their special circumstances". The financial barrier to adult participation remains thus powerful, and it may well be the highest in the adult obstacle race to a higher education degree.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See note 1 of the Introduction.

2. A. Wagner in H.G. Schütze (ed.), *Participation of Adults in the United Kingdom and in North America*, Stockholm (Almquist and Wicksell), 1987.

3. Only in two fields of study, i.e. law and dentistry, the majority of new entrants is below 25 years of age; in all others the traditional age group is in the minority, see Abrahamsson, *Adult Participation in Swedish Higher Education -- A Study of Organisational Structure, Educational Design and Current Policies*, Stockholm (Almquist and Wicksell) 1986, p. 24.

4. OECD, *Policies for Higher Education in the 1990s*, Paris 1983, p. 219-221; and OECD, *Girls and Women in Education -- A Cross-national Study of Sex Inequalities in Upbringing and in Schools and Colleges*, Paris 1986.

5. M. Slowey, in H.G. Schütze, *op. cit.*

6. C. Paquet, in H.G. Schütze, *op. cit.*

7. See D. Fichtner, "Adult Studies in the Federal Republic of Germany", in Klingler/Posch (eds.), *Studierende mit Berufserfahrung -- eine Herausforderung an die Universitäten* (Students with Work Experience -- A Challenge for the Universities), Vienna (Böhlau), 1986, p. 118-121. It should be noted, however, that a group of experts has come up recently with a catalogue of recommendations which are presently under discussion. These would, if put into practice, remove existing barriers to allow students to pursue degree studies while being in steady employment, cf. *Studium neben dem Beruf* (Studying beside Working), Bonn (Federal Ministry of Education and Science), 1986.

8. Cf. H. Fengler *et al.*, *Berufliche Qualifikation und Hochschulzugang* (Vocational Qualification and Access to Higher Education), Oldenburg, 1983. Cf. further A. Wolter/W.D. Scholz, "Studienerfahrungen und Studienerfolg von Berufstätigen" (Experience and Success Rate of Students without Academic Entrance Exams), in Klingler/Posch, *op. cit.*, p. 115-117.

9. The information of this section is based both on the Austrian Country Survey and J. Klingler, *Students with Work Experience -- A Challenge for the Universities*, *op. cit.*, p.7-18.

10. Further to Slowey (note 5 above), see C. Chattaway, "Facilitating the Participation of Adults in Higher Education", in Klingler/Posch, *op.cit.*, p. 69-76.

11. Quoted by Paquet, *op. cit.*

12. Abrahamsson, *op. cit.*

13. Wagner, *op. cit.*

14. Abrahamsson, *op. cit.*

15. See, for example, OECD, *Policies for Higher Education in the 1980s*, *op. cit.*, Table A9.

16. Cf. *OECD Employment Outlook*, 1986.

17. It can nevertheless be assumed that in fact many students pursue their studies part-time. This is not only evidenced by the need for many to engage in (part-time) employment (see note 41 below), but also by the average length of studies: some 20 per cent of the 1.3 million students are enrolled six years and longer, more than 10 per cent longer than eight years.

18. For reference, see Wagner, *op. cit.*

19. U. Dahlöf, "Towards a Contextual Rationale in Distance Higher Education: The Small-scale Cases of Australia and Sweden", in G. van Enckevort/K. Harry/P. Morin/H.G. Schütze (eds.), *Distance Higher Education and the Adult Learner*, Assen (Dutch Open University), 1986.

20. *Ibid.*

21. For more detailed information about the distance universities mentioned here, see contributions by Y. Abe; W. Perry/K. Harry; D. Popa-Lisseanu; G. Leibbrandt/P. Morin/G. van Enckevort/H. de Wolf; O. Peters/K. Küffner, in G. van Enckevort *et al.*, *op. cit.*

22. See *ibid.* for information about distance study in Yugoslavia (by A. Krajnz) and Portugal (A. Rocha-Trindade).

23. Abrahamsson, *op. cit.*, p. 41-42.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

25. See Slowey, *op. cit.*

26. Paquet, *op. cit.*

27. The Open University, *The Costs and Cost-Effectiveness of the University*, Information Sheet N° 2 (June 1984).

28. M. Richards, "Struggling to Stay Open", in *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 27th July 1984.

29. D. Popa-Lisseanu, "Objectives and Organisation of the UNED", in G. van Enckevort *et al.*, *op. cit.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. Wagner, *op. cit.*

32. Cf. M. Woodhall, *Financial Support for Students: A Review of Present Policy and Future Options* (1983).

33. Cf. H. Levin, "Individual Entitlements", in H. Levin/H.G. Schütze (eds.), *Financing Recurrent Education*, Beverly Hills (Sage, 1983).

34. Cf. G.B. Smith, "Employer-sponsored Programs", in H. Levin/H.G. Schütze (eds.), *op. cit.*

35. Wagner, *op. cit.*

36. Council of Ministers of Education/Secretary of State, *Report of the Federal Provincial Task Force on Student Assistance*, Ottawa, 1981, p. 14.

37. Quoted by Paquet, *op. cit.*

38. K. Rubenson, "Financing Paid Educational Leave: The Swedish Model", in H. Levin/H.G. SchÜtze (eds.), *op. cit.*

39. Cf. H.G. Schütze, *Educational Leave in Europe*, Stanford (Institute for Research on Educational Finance and Governance), 1983 (Policy paper N° 83-C3).

40. Federal Ministry of Education and Science (Bonn), Basic Education Statistics, 1985/86.

41. K. Schnitzer *et al.*, *Das Soziale Bild der Studentenschaft in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (The Social Situation of Students in Germany), Bonn (Federal Ministry of Education and Science), 1983.

42. Cf. V. Stoikov, *The Economics of Recurrent Education and Training*, Geneva (ILO), 1975.

43. See F. Edding, *Die Finanzierung der Weiterbildung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Financing Continuing Education -- Facts and Problems), in D. Kuhlenkamp/H.G. Schütze (eds.), *Kosten und Finanzierung der beruflichen und nicht-beruflichen Weiterbildung* (Cost and Financing of Continuing Education and Training), Frankfurt (Diesterweg), 1982.

# Chapter III

## CONTINUING EDUCATION THROUGH UNIVERSITIES: THE NEW MISSION (1)

Not all of the adults who enroll in higher education programmes do so with the objective of gaining a full degree. In fact, a majority of mature students who are following university-level higher education are enrolled in continuing education programmes with the intention of refreshing, updating or enlarging their qualifications or for personal development. Adults are thus enrolled in a large variety of shorter courses, most of which are non-credit, i.e. they cannot be used to accumulate credits for acquiring a degree. However, the degree/non-degree distinction to mark the difference of degree studies and continued education is blurred in some instances where the same courses can be taken for credit or not, depending on the objectives of the students and his enrolment status.

In this chapter, we attempt to provide an overview of some recent developments, policies and practice in some Member countries in what appears to be a major move in a new direction and a new mission for higher education.

### 1. CONTINUING HIGHER EDUCATION: POLICIES

If higher education policies and structures in the Member countries are of a bewildering variety, policies and practice in the field of continuing higher education are even more diverse and hard to characterise. This is partly because of different concepts and traditions and partly because continuing education was, until recently, not considered to be a central mission of higher education and thus left to the initiative of individual institutions.

More recently, continuing higher education has come to the fore of public attention and, in a number of countries, policy making or advisory bodies have ruled or recommended that continuing education become a central mission of universities and other university-level higher education institutions.

As mentioned earlier, Sweden has most sweepingly reformed the entire higher education system to accommodate adults. The 1975 Higher Education Act and the subsequent reform of 1977 established that the entire post-compulsory education system was to be based on the recurrent education principle.

According to this principle, the student is given the choice between general study programmes and separate or single courses, while the distinction between degree studies and continuing education is eliminated. Less radical were the reforms of higher education in France and Germany, but, in both cases, the law stipulates that higher education institutions engage actively in continuing education.

On the level of policy advising bodies, the Universities Grants Committee (UGC) in the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission in Australia, or the German Wissenschaftsrat (Science Council) have pleaded strongly for an increased role of higher education in continuing education:

> "We recommend that the stated policy of Universities should be to regard continuing education as a central part of their role and to give it status and recognition equal to research and to the traditional teaching of young under-graduates." (UGC, 1984).
>
> "Continuing education is an important function of higher education institutions and should be regarded as part of the normal duties of teaching staff. Higher education institutions should be encouraged to expand their continuing education activities, particularly in the area of continuing professional/vocational education." (Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission).

In the case of Germany, the Science Council's recommendation was less straightforward than that of its British and Australian counterparts:

> "When we issue at this time a recommendation for concrete measures in favour of continuing education through university-level higher education institutions, we are conscious that initial education and research have priority, in particular since traditional age student numbers are increasing and resources are becoming scarcer. Nevertheless, higher education establishments must already now be working to develop concepts for continuing education to respond to the changing demands for education." (Science Council, 1983).

This relatively weak endorsement is explained, not only by the present difficulties encountered by higher education institutions in satisfying the still increasing demand from traditional age group students, but also by the concern on the part of non-academic providers that higher education may eventually become a strong competitor in the lucrative market of adult education since, in contrast to non-academic adult education, generally no fees are charged to higher education students. Although this statement seems to be a step backward with respect to the 1976 Higher Education (Framework) Act, it may be more realistic than the law given the above situation as well as the "markedly reserved attitude" by higher education institutions towards continuing education.

There have been a number of other statements or recommendations from policy advisory bodies and others in other Member countries. Those just cited, however, provide representative enough examples.

## 2. TRADITIONS AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

As already demonstrated, most countries surveyed enjoy a diffuse, decentralised adult education provision, which is characterised by the involvement of a wide variety of agencies. It is our task to single out from this entire range of methods of organisation and levels of courses, the continuing education provision by higher education institutions. This is not only very difficult to do, but is to some extent artificial, as there is frequently much interweaving between the different agencies.

In categorising the different activities included within the definition of continuing higher education, it is possible to identify three related, but distinct, areas which emerge from the country studies. In the first place there are a variety of ways in which it is possible for adults to participate in parts of existing degree programmes. These can range from simply the facility of "sitting-in" on lectures to the possibility of taking assessments and gaining credit towards a qualification. The second form of activity which can be identified relates to the dissemination of "liberal" knowledge to the community by institutions of higher education. This essentially forms the traditional work of extra-mural and extension departments. Finally, there is the role of institutions of higher education in the provision of vocational updating and retraining. This work already represents one of the most significant areas of change for universities and other institutions of higher education, as they become increasingly involved in the provision of professional continuing education, and tailor-made courses for industrial, commercial and public sector bodies in their region.

In approaching the area of continuing higher education, it is tempting to use categories such as "credit/non-credit" or "vocational/non-vocational". While in some cases these distinctions may be useful, they can also be somewhat misleading. Thus, while continuing education is often thought of as "non-credit", this is frequently not strictly the case in professional areas where, for example, assessment and certification may be required for purposes of re-registration with professional bodies. Similarly, the vocational/non-vocational split is not always easy to identify, particularly when the motivation of the student is taken into account.

The organisation of continuing education in higher education has undergone many changes in recent years which are important to bear in mind, but before considering them, the three main categories of continuing education identified above will be briefly discussed.

### a) Participation in existing degree programmes

Some countries, such as Austria and Germany, have a tradition where adults interested in the content of degree programmes, but not in obtaining the qualification, can register and "sit-in" alongside conventional students. These are commonly called Gasthörer (guest auditors). While in Germany these Gasthörer are not required to hold higher education qualifications, in Austria they are. However, in Austria, a second category exists, -- ausserordentliche Hörer (extraordinary auditors) for whom entry credentials are waived as long as they can claim that they possess sufficient relevant knowledge. Although of the same tradition, there is another important difference between Germany and Austria, namely that in Austria both categories can sit examinations while in Germany they cannot.

Many polytechnics in the United Kingdom have recently introduced "Associate Student" schemes which offer the same kind of opportunities. These schemes are used by people wishing to update in particular areas, or by those who are simply interested in the topic. In some schemes, it is possible to take the assessments and hence build up towards a qualification, similar to the separate courses in Sweden, or credits in the United States. This can thus provide an alternative entry route for those without formal entry qualifications.

Obviously the value of such schemes will depend to a large extent on the timing and organisation of courses, as few adults will be available to attend during the daytime. The potential for gaining credit is also important and ties in with the discussion on part-time degree courses in the previous section.

In Australia, the majority of universities and colleges of advanced education provide the opportunity for sitting in on courses that are being offered for credit towards a degree. Although nothing is said about entry requirements, it can probably be assumed that, as in the case of extra-mural continuing education, access is open. In a number of institutions in the United States and in Canada, it is possible to enroll in courses creditable towards a degree as a non-degree student. In this case, the student participates in the programme but cannot take the examination. Often, the fee for non-degree participation is less than for a degree student.

A significant development in terms of provision for "auditors" or associate students are the opportunities offered by "distance universities". They provide adults with the chance of selecting a single part of a course without enrolling on a whole degree programme. In the Distance University of Hagen for example about 40 per cent of those registered for the 1983/84 session were auditors -- that is, they were registered for a programme of study without, however, having the possibility of taking examinations. In the Open University in the United Kingdom, Associate Students tend to account for something just over 10 per cent of all registrations. As more people seek continuing education, it is likely that this proportion will increase; however, it is interesting to note that there are fundamental differences between the two institutions. As the Open University of the United Kingdom has an open admissions policy for its full degree programmes, it is likely that anyone who elects to register as an associate student is doing so by choice -- either, for example, because they do not wish to study for a full degree, or because they already have a degree and wish to undertake some updating. However, in the case of the Distance University of Hagen, where degree students must satisfy the conventional university entry requirements, the only way many adults who wish to study their programmes can do so is by registering as an auditor. Thus, for example, of those who registered as auditors in the academic year 1983/84, 39 per cent did not have conventional university entry qualifications, and thus would have been unable to register for a degree if they had wished to. As was mentioned earlier, associate student schemes are sometimes used as alternative entry methods by permitting people to take parts of courses and thus to study and take assessments at their own pace. This is, however, not possible at Hagen, so for some groups of students at least the auditor scheme may be awkward.

b) Liberal studies

In certain countries, in particular the United States, the United Kingdom and, following the United Kingdom example, most of the other Anglo-Saxon countries, institutions of higher education have a long tradition of providing extension or extra-mural activities. These are generally designed with the objective of bringing knowledge areas associated with higher education, in particular the humanities and social sciences, out of the "ivory towers" and into the community. In general, these courses have been open access and non-certifiable, and were regarded as part of the community service of universities.

In the United Kingdom, for example, most universities, as recommended by the 1919 "Final Report", have a separate extra-mural department organising such activities on their own behalf, or in conjunction with the Workers' Education Association. The tuition is usually done by a core of full-time staff based in the extra-mural departments, and supported by a far greater number of part-time lecturers. The benefits and problems of such separate departments have been long argued. On the one hand, they have the benefit of great flexibility and potential for responsiveness to the educational needs of adults in their region; on the other, problems arise from the danger that they may tend to be seen as marginal to the mainstream work of the institution. One result of this is the prestige, or lack of it, which is associated with this type of work with adult students. The other main problem arises from the fact that much innovative work in terms of teaching methods, experience in co-ordinating with non-traditional students, content of programmes, etc., occurs in these extra-mural areas which may make the application of such innovations (much of which could be applied with great benefit to the institutions as a whole) more difficult to bring about.

Universities and other institutions of higher education in the United States also have a long history of extension work, with a particularly strong tradition of work with the farming community. In 1980-81 there were over 12 million registrations in short-term non-credit courses, a high proportion of which were found in the area of liberal education. While much of this work is still carried out by centralised extension units, there has been a shift of much of the work, in particular continuing professional education, to individual departments or faculties.

In Canada, it is estimated that about 40 per cent of all part-time students are enrolled in non-credit courses. It is interesting to note that the range in the proportion of non-credit courses across the ten different provinces varies widely from a low of 10 per cent in one province up to a figure of 66 per cent in another (2).

c) Vocational updating and retraining -- continuing professional education

The third, and most rapidly expanding and changing area of continuing education, is in its provision for the professions. Much has been written on the increasing rate of obsolescence of different knowledge areas, with the resultant necessity for updating and retraining programmes. Universities and other institutions of higher education have obviously a unique role to play in meeting these requirements, not least because they are the initial educators/trainers for most of the professions, and form important centres for research and the dissemination of new ideas and knowledge. Because of the growing importance and complexity of this whole area, we will explore it in more detail.

## 3. CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

In general, in all Member countries, a steadily increasing proportion of the labour force consists of gradutes working in the professions. In 1980, service occupations accounted for 42 to 69 per cent of the total labour force in fifteen countries, and on average, one service job in three was of a higher level -- namely professional, technical and scientific workers, plus higher level administrative and managerial workers (3). Thus, while numbers grew substantially in the service sector as a whole in the 1970s, this growth was particularly marked in the categories requiring continuing professional updating. There is now wide recognition of the need for updating, refreshing and re-orientation for professional groups, not only in the light of advances in knowledge and technology, but also because of legal and regulatory changes. A growing number of professional bodies throughout the survey countries have developed positive policies for continuing professional development. In most European countries, this, by and large, takes the form of advice and encouragement, but the United States has experienced a fairly widespread movement towards mandatory continuing education in certain fields.

Professional groups do not always look to institutions of higher education for their updating -- the professional bodies themselves and a growing number of private agencies are actively involved -- and, in fact, the bulk of the work is done by such bodies rather than by institutions of higher education. However, there seems little doubt as to the unique role which higher education can play in continuing professional education. No other agencies can match the resources which it has to offer in terms of expertise, research and, frequently, specialised equipment.

> "In contrast to other public or private institutions of continuing education, the universities dispose of a comprehensive research potential that can be utilised for the purposes of continuing education. As a component of continuing education, research activities and the supply of research results represent a substantial advantage for the solution of practice orientated problems." (4).

In addition to this historic involvement of higher education in research, and its recently expanding role in the dissemination of findings to practitioners in the field, there are several other characteristics that distinguish the provision of continuing professional education by the universities and other institutions of higher education. One of these arises from their autonomy, which "... allows a conception of continuing education that is not restricted to an advanced training that focuses on mere adaptation but that imparts comprehensive knowledge of scientific methods and solutions" (5). In countries such as the United States and, increasingly, the United Kingdom, the emphasis on the self-financing and income-generating nature of continuing professional education can mean in practice some deviation from this ideal. There can be a problem in balancing the provision of independent and critical programmes with the frequently short-term demands of the market. This may result, for example, in an over-emphasis on the practice of new technologies, to the exclusion of a more critical exploration of their wider social and economic effects.

Continuing professional education is not a one-time only event -- by its very nature it has to be systematic and on-going. The structure of institutions of higher education is well suited to assuring the long-term character of continuing education, thanks to the existence (in the best of cases) of well-established systems of feedback and evaluation, the results of which can be built into future programmes.

The concern for the maintenance of professional competence in view of rapid scientific and technological progress has been at the base of the move towards compulsory or mandatory continuing education in a number of countries. The requirement to participate in organised educational activities as a prerequisite to the renewal of professional licences is probably most common in the United States, although the original momentum has given way to increasing doubts about its efficiency and appropriateness. Although universities and professional schools play a role in this mandatory continuing education, the bulk is done by professional bodies, such as the Medical or the Bar Associations.

The same is true for the European countries, although the need for "relicensing" is mostly not made mandatory by an act of the (state) legislatures like in the United States, but rather by professional associations. For example, in the United Kingdom, a small number of professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Town Planning Institute, have introduced a requirement to take continuing professional education as a condition of continued membership. In some situations this only applies to recent graduates but it does represent a movement in the United States direction. In 1981-82, 44 per cent of students taking what are called "post-experience vocational education" programmes in British universities were in post-graduate medical and dental courses (6). The next largest categories were education programmes (22 per cent) and programmes in business, administrative and social studies (11 per cent). In polytechnics, as mentioned above, one-third of courses were in administration and business, with around 12 per cent in each of engineering, science, mathematics and education (7).

The field of continuing professional education is very wide and varied. Therefore, any attempt to paint a full and accurate picture of the situation in the Member countries would require a considerable amount of further work, in spite of the host of information that is contained in the country surveys prepared for the present project. As mentioned above, continuing professional education is probably the main growth sector in higher education and characterised by new forms and new co-operative relationships of higher education and the outside world. The Lifelong Cooperative Education Program of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is an expression of such a new mission that higher education institutions are required to assume:

> "In spite of the considerable effort and resources currently being devoted to continuing education, the problems caused by the galloping pace of technological innovation are still with us, and are becoming

> increasingly serious with the growing economic importance of the knowledge intensive industry. Continuing education, as presently conceived and practiced, is not enough; education must become a lifelong affair and an integral, expected part of productive work. Universities must add lifelong education to their charters, and industrial organisations must share responsibilities for it as active partners, rather than as customers."

## 4. ORGANISATION AND FINANCE

As has already been mentioned, in those countries where continuing education has formed part of the tradition of the higher education system, particular changes in the organisation of this area of work are discernible. It is clear that the major erosion of centralised provision has come from the professional schools, which, for reasons of independence, control and, not least, potential for generation of income, have increasingly sought to provide continuing education directly rather than through a centralised extension or extra-mural unit. As one commentator in the United States situation rather wryly points out:

> "No longer may centralised extension units be equated exclusively with university continuing education, much as their continuing education deans and directors may polemically claim they are, or more candidly deplore, they are not." (8)

Professional schools are closely tied in with the professional bodies who are increasingly seeking ways of encouraging, if not requiring that, their members engage in continuing education. Academic staff are members of these bodies themselves, and they and their faculties have come to see increasing advantages in putting on such programmes directly.

This pattern is also visible in the United Kingdom. The recent report of the University Grants Committee, for example, while referring to the "valuable" work of extra-mural departments, goes on to recommend the establishment of structures which, while providing an acknowledged focus of responsibility for continuing education, should be "... fully integrated into the academic and administrative structures of the university" (9).

It is not surprising that many of those who have worked in adult/continuing education for many years, on the margins of higher education institutions, should feel somewhat resentful at what many of them see as their (previously often dismissive) colleagues, "cashing-in" on the current rapid expansion of continuing education. Thus, the increased role of regular departments in continuing education is creating substantial tension, not only because of the financial consequences but also because, it is argued, the education of adults and adult ways of learning are very different from those of conventional young students, and that the wealth of experience of higher education institutions in dealing with issues is, by and large, concentrated in the extension/extra-mural departments. It has been suggested that the very fact that they were marginal to the main work of the institution gave them a great freedom to innovate:

> "In the course of their marginal existence, continuing education staffs contributed significantly to the demise of myths about education that had resulted in "time-tested" policies and practices: that youth is the best time for all forms of education; that older people cannot learn very much; that the best, perhaps the only, way to educate students is to bring them together in a school building; that the best place in a school to perform the act of education is in a classroom; and that a particular set of admission standards, written examinations, grades, credits and degrees constitute a fundamentally sound system for teaching and learning." (10)

The difference between the extension approach and that of the mainstream institution is frequently characterised as being that the philosophy of the former is to place the learner at the centre, adjusting the curriculum and learning environment as appropriate to the adult's needs. Within the mainstream work of higher education, on the other hand, the discipline tends to be at the centre, and it is the student who is expected to adjust to a clearly established curriculum and learning environment.

There are two main counter-arguments to these positions. The first is that all students, including young ones, would benefit by the application of many of the practices developed through the teaching of adult continuing education students. The second is that the discipline specialists are most likely to know the client for their subject areas, and to be best able to identify their continuing education requirements and to design programmes suited to their needs. This argument is made particularly strongly in areas such as medicine, business, law, education, engineering -- in other words those areas most directly involved in the continuing professional education.

Matters of institutional finance were mentioned above. There are three general patterns regarding the finance of non-degree courses: those systems which require non-degree studies to be self-financing, those which are partially subsidised and thus charge students a reduced fee only, and finally those where non-degree provision is part of the institutions's general budget.

Since North American extension departments are generally self-financing, no (low) fee competition from regular departments is a problem. Even if mainstream departments would ask adult students enrolled in a refresher course the same fee as extension departments, their net profit would be considerably higher as overhead costs, or a share of it, are normally part of the Department's overall budget which is, to a large extent, subsidised from other funds.

In some states in the United States (e.g. California, Michigan and Texas), certain accredited non-credit courses are partly subsidised by public funds. In Australia, where fees are charged to meet the direct teaching costs while overhead costs are borne by the institution's overall budget, about half the institutions included in the Australian survey for the present CERI project grant fee concessions to certain groups of non-credit students, such as the unemployed, disadvantaged groups, or pensioners. In the United Kingdom, universities receive grants for extra-mural courses on the basis of a full-time equivalence formula (some $7.6 million in 1983-84) so that student fees charged cover only part of the costs incurred. Sweden, finally, offers an example for fully subsidised continuing education courses.

Not in all cases are fees charged to the individual student. In France, where the 1971 Act on Continuing Professional Training makes it mandatory for firms employing more than ten persons to devote at least 1.1 per cent of their wage bill to spending for continuing training of the workforce, this sum must be used to pay for training activities inside or outside the enterprise and any dues not spent on training must be paid into the French Treasury. While most of the training takes place in the enterprise, in particular the larger ones, there are a good deal of outside training institutions that provide courses in particular for highly-qualified personnel (11). Thus, in 1981, some 170 000 employees participated in programmes offered by universities, the fees being assumed by their employers.

Likewise, although not required by law, employers in the United States are turning in great numbers to college and university continuing education programmes to provide training for employees. The support tends to be allocated for training specific to an employee's current occupation and job responsibilities (e.g. supervision and cost accounting courses for managers). The growth in the proportions of adults receiving support from their employer for their continuing education course suggests that this may be an increasingly important means of promoting the participation of adults in continuing education. The same development can be observed, although at a much slower pace, in some other European Member countries such as Germany and the United Kingdom.

As far as individual finance is concerned, non-credit courses are, as a rule, not eligible for student support. However, in addition to the financial support already mentioned (employers taking over fees, fee concessions for certain groups of students), outlays for continuing education are often deductible from the income tax.

## 5. ISSUES OUTSTANDING

It is obvious from this brief survey of recent developments concerning continuing education through higher education institutions that considerable further work needs to be undertaken for a fuller picture of the situation and of the issues that arise.

One of the areas of further investigation and discussion will have to be staff attitudes and incentives for faculty to engage in continuing education rather than primarily or exclusively in research and undergraduate teaching. Another issue is the range of offerings to be provided by higher education institutions. While currently extra-mural or extension departments often offer courses that have little or nothing to do with the institutions' mainstream activities, using outside faculty and off-campus location, others consider that continuing education should confine itself to academic subjects, leaving others to non-academic providers. In this context, forms of co-operation with such other providers, in particular the various professional associations, need to be further discussed.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The Secretariat wishes to acknowledge the valuable contribution by Ms. Maria Slowey, Senior lecturer at the Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic and both author of the UK survey and co-author of the Irish report, in the preparation of this chapter.

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## Chapter IV

# OVERCOMING BARRIERS OF TIME AND DISTANCE: THE ROLE OF INFORMATION AND TELECOMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Learning at a distance, independent of campus or classroom attendance and of schedules often set up to serve full-time students, is especially appropriate for adults who have to combine studies with other demands on their time, in particular work and family or other social commitments. As has been shown (Chapter II), single purpose distance teaching universities, or distance provision through traditional institutions have played an increasingly important role in providing second chance opportunities for adults and thus in enhancing adult participation in higher education.

In spite of the development of a number of new information and telecommunication technologies, distance education has relied so far mainly on more traditional media, mostly print, but also on television, radio, telephone and audio-cassettes, which have been chiefly used, however, to supplement and support printed course materials. Even the newer distance universities that have gone into operation only recently, such as the Dutch Open University (OU-NL) and the Japanese University of the Air, have followed this pattern.

Nevertheless, new technological developments are of great interest to most institutions of higher education and in particular to distance teaching institutions where they are closely monitored. Thus, virtually all of the single purpose distance teaching institutions have special institutes or departments for the evaluation of new technologies, some of which are gradually being applied. In contrast to the more cautious attitude of the European and the Japanese institutions, the new information and telecommunication technologies seem to be more enthusiastically embraced in North America and in particular in the United States, where there are a growing number of institutions, or consortia of several institutions, that are replacing classroom tuition and text books with interactive electronic media.

The interest in, and expansion of, new information and telecommunication media are, however, not limited to higher education institutions or departments specialising in distance education. Increasingly, post-secondary institutions serving students on campus use computer work stations and some of them are either supplying all of their students with micro-computers or requesting them to bring their own. The introduction of such technologies is often done in close co-operation with industry, to wit hardware producers who have discovered that higher education holds the promise of an enormous market for their wares.

## 1. INFORMATION AND TELECOMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR USE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Before considering of the potential of "the new media" for adult students in higher education, we must first take stock of the technologies on which they are based. Three main groups can be distinguished: audio, video and computer-based technologies.

A further distinction, important when discussing their use for education, is the mode of utilisation which can be either one way only, i.e. passing a message (course) from the instructor to the learner (non-interactive mode), or two way (interactive mode) which permits interaction between the faculty and the students and, in some cases, among the students themselves. Table IV illustrates this. It is to be noted, however, that the media can be, and often are, combined in various configurations, thus multiplying their modes of application and increasing the flexibility of their utilisation. Instances of the increased application of these technologies abound, in particular in the United States and in Canada, and the great variety of programmes based on them is bewildering. Two examples, however, will serve to illustrate the position, one using computer technology as its main medium, the other video technology.

The first is the newly-established Electronic University which offers 170 college level courses to anyone owning a home computer and a telephone. A prospective student simply needs to purchase a special telephone interconnect device, called the "knowledge module" that will link the student's home computer to one of the main-frames in the so-called Tele Learning Network. The student can register for courses ranging from fundamentals of classical music to business mathematics or marine biology, receiving lessons and taking examinations on a 24-hour basis. The lessons are either sent by mail as floppy-disc programmes for the home computer or loaded directly into the home computer's memory without complicated sign-on procedures or lengthy and expensive telephone connections. Using electronic mail techniques the students can communicate with instructors or conduct one-to-one computer-to-computer dialogues. So far, none of the Electronic Universities have been accredited but plans are under way for accredited institutions to use the Tele Learning Network for the delivery of their programmes.

Although the application of computer technology to distance learning is probably the one receiving most attention, the use of television represents the most popular mode of technology for instruction in North America. This provides our second example. While in the past, television was clearly non-interactive which limited its usefulness for educational purposes, the development of cable TV, which allows for interactive communication between instructor and student, has greatly enhanced its potential for distance education. Cable TV is the primary medium of the TAGER television network (the acronym standing for Texas Association of Graduate Education and Research), the largest closed-circuit higher education network in the United States. Originally a system aimed at delivering higher education level instruction at work sites through a partnership between the private sector, TAGER has now been connected to the area's cable systems, thus providing the capacity to deliver instruction directly into homes. Although TAGER also offers undergraduate courses, 85 per cent of its courses consist of graduate level engineering, business, and computer science programmes for credit, i.e. leading to an advanced degree.

Table IV

TELECOMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES

| | Non-interactive | Interactive |
|---|---|---|
| Audio | - Radio (primary carrier)<br>- Radio (subcarrier)<br>- Audiotape | - Telephone<br>- Audio Teleconferencing |
| Video | - Open-braodcast television<br>- Cable television (one-way)<br>- Videotape<br>- Instructional Television Fixed Service (ITFS)<br>- Satellite television (one-way)<br>- Slow scan/freeze frame television (one-way) | - Microwave (point-to-point)<br>- Cable television (two-way or viewer-response)<br>- Slow scan/freeze frame television (two-way)<br>- Electronic blackboard<br>- Satellite television (two-way)<br>- Video Teleconferencing |
| Computer | | - Computer-assisted instruction<br>- Computer-based instructional management |

Source: R. Lewis, *Meeting Learners' Needs through Telecommunications*, Washington D.C. (Centre for Learning and Telecommunications), 1983.

As in the case of many other institutions or networks of institutions providing university level education at a distance, cable TV is not the only medium for TAGER programmes, but is complemented by other means of telecommunication, including ITFS (Instructional Television Fixed Service) broadcast, point-to-point microwave, satellite, video cassettes and telephone. Not used by TAGER but by other providers are audio and video conferencing, electronic blackboards, video discs and combinations therefore, e.g. computers linked to videotape or videodisc systems. Teletext and videotex systems that permit the delivery of graphic and textual information via broadcast, telephone, or cable for display on a television screen are of less importance in the United States but are being used, although to a modest degree so far, for distance education purposes in Canada, France, the United Kingdom and Germany.

## 2. THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR ADULT LEARNERS

With TV, radio, and telephones more or less commonplace in most households in OECD countries and the presence of cable TV, video recorders and home computers spreading rapidly over the last few years, there is a growing base for an increased utilisation of such technology for educational purposes (1). This technological development and its utilisation for potential and actual telecommunication-based instruction and learning raises a maze of policy issues and practical questions which cannot all be identified and analysed here. However, a few of them must be touched upon when attempting to assess the potential of these developments regarding adult participation in higher education. This must be done with a view to the adult learner and the particular circumstances in which adults learn. How can adults be motivated to learn and can technology enhance this process? How can they find out about what post-secondary level education is available to them and which programmes are suited to their perceived needs or aspirations? How do they learn? To what extent are information and telecommunication technologies suited to adult learning needs and to what extent do adults need a social environment or individual help in order to pursue their studies successfully? Obviously, the answers will depend on the type of adult learner, his or her motivation and objectives as well as the type of available programme.

### Information and guidance

A fear of being unable or too old to learn is an often cited reason adults, especially those with a lower educational background, give for their non-participation in educational activities. Techniques to address this negative attitude include personal counselling, educational and career guidance, or various ways of self-assessment aiming at helping adults to build self-esteem and self-confidence in their own learning abilities. Computers, so it is argued, although they may have threatening aspects to those who are unfamiliar with the way they operate, can be an efficient tool in this process.

> "The micro-computer is infinitively patient and rarely talks back or criticises. In fact, where used in self-awareness development or guidance, the computer is often programmed to be gently reassuring. Use of the micro-computer frees the counsellor from information-gathering tasks and permits a focus on more personal and particular aspects of each adult's needs. Computers can be efficient and unbiased, being both sex and colour-blind." (2).

Using this capacity, there are currently a number of sophisticated computer-based information and guidance systems in the United States that provide personalised information and help for individual goal assessment and decision making, based on interactive, structured standard interviews administered by the computer. While the experience so far seems to be positive, their use is not yet widespread. One of the reasons may be the limited capacity at this point of the various systems to cope with the bewildering wealth of opportunities and programmes which may defy any attempt to establish a systematic and comprehensive search file. With the great mass of information about institutions -- the course titles, duration, modes of study, entry requirements, course content, qualifications awarded upon completion, recognition by other institutions or bodies of the qualifications achieved, fees and various sources of financial assistance -- the difficulty of finding the right keyword or narrowing the search down sufficiently in order to retrieve the relevant information is formidable indeed.

An attempt to establish a comprehensive computer-based information and advisory service was made recently in the United Kingdom with the launching of an Educational Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS). To design this system, which aims at helping students, school leavers and adult returners to find out about university, polytechnic and college courses all over the United Kingdom, the Department of Education has funded a three-year developmental programme that is currently being undertaken by the Open University.

More common than such comprehensive national systems are computerised information and counselling services of individual institutions that, on the basis of written structured interviews, provide would-be students with individualised information and advice. Although useful for a first and basic quest for information, such systems cannot be a substitute for personal counselling. It is therefore probably not unfair to suggest that such systems are designed to provide the institution with information about the inquiring individual rather than the other way around (3).

## Instruction and learning

Issues of instructional methods and contents of adult learning activities are, as concepts of learning generally, quite complex. Adults are a very heterogeneous group, defying any common characterisation, except for their age, so answers to questions of method differ considerably, depending especially on previous learning experience and educational attainment. Research on how adults (as opposed to young people) learn is also not conclusive, offering a variety of concepts and observations that cannot be easily summarised (4). However, researchers seem to agree that:

-- There are two principal and seemingly contradictory adult attitudes and approaches to higher education study. While some are said to have the tendency to be uncritical and to submit completely and humbly to the demands, real or imagined, of the leader or the institutions, others are labelled as active and critical participants with the competence to choose, influence and take decisions and responsibilities;

-- Adults unfamiliar with systematic learning require a more highly structured, instructional approach than those used to theoretical learning who tend to learn better in a more open (i.e. self-controlled and creative) process;

-- Adults tend to learn better when the course content is related to real life problems and issues and their own professional and life experience -- a consequence of the fact that the most common study motives of adults are pragmatic or job related;

-- As adults in their majority are forced to combine study and work and therefore operate under the constraints of a limited time budget, they are (feel) often obliged to learn what appear to be the most useful bits of knowledge in the most time-efficient way (5).

Given the heterogeneity of the adult student group, the great variety of new information and telecommunication technologies and the lack of conclusive reasons concerning adult learning patterns, the suitability of the different new technologies as media and/or tools in the adult learning process is difficult to assess in any detailed or systematic way. A few comments about the advantages and disadvantages of these technologies for the adult student must therefore suffice here (6).

The non-interactive technologies (broadcast television and radio, audio cassettes, etc.) have the advantage of being available in most households, and therefore familiar and non-threatening to use. Learning can be done alone or in groups both at home or at the workplace. Their disadvantages may, however, prevail: the home, and the living room in particular, often is not an ideal place for regular and concentrated learning, especially in a family situation. Viewing or listening times set for TV and radio transmissions may conflict with work schedules or other pre-commitments constraints. Unless regular study groups are organised to follow televised or radio courses, there is no learning via peer group interactions. Nor can the learner ask questions or make comments to the instructor during the course sessions, and a high level of motivation is required by student and faculty to establish and maintain contact by telephone or mail.

This is very different when interactive technologies such as telephone, audio or video conferencing, two-way cable TV and the like are used. Here, learners can make comments and ask questions during the sessions and immediate feedback is often available from the instructor. In the case of some of these technologies, e.g. audio or teleconferencing, opportunities also exist for interaction with peer learners during course sessions. But, here too, several disadvantages limit their usefulness. First, with the exception of the telephone, adults may be unfamiliar with the technology as well as intimidated by the prospect of speaking over live network to the instructor and peer students. Since the size of distance classes is not limited, opportunities for individual students to ask questions or suggest comments may be reduced as numbers of students increase, in particular if there are fellow students who try to monopolise the conversation. As in the case of one-way TV or radio courses, course sessions are time bound, and, even if available, video taping or audio taping cannot duplicate the interactive experience.

The greatest disadvantage of more sophisticated information and telecommunication equipment is its costs which put students from lower income background at a severe disadvantage. Multiple cable television services (e.g. videotext, educational access channels, narrowcast educational channels), video cassette recorders, video disc playback machines and other advanced technologies entail considerable costs, and unless low income students have access to such equipment in community centres, public libraries or the like, they will be excluded from a wide variety of formal and informal educational options that can be accessed exclusively through such media .

A third category of interactive technologies is computer based. While having some of the same characteristics as the others, they are very different in some important respects. In fact, it has been argued that, while all the other technologies were peripheral to the core enterprise of campus-based higher education, the computer marks a turning point as it is becoming a part of the core technology as an ubiquitous tool in the service of the whole array of academic activities, including teaching and learning (7).

The emergence of the computer as a central tool of higher education is, of course, a very recent development. Only 15 years ago, an OECD report was remarking on the universities' indifference towards it:

> "Computer science and the tools it uses are the key factor of growth in contemporary society, and are even more bound to be tomorrow. Each area of human activity is gradually being invaded by computer technology, whose effects can daily be felt. Education is one of the very few sectors which are still holding out or which, at any rate, have so far proved relatively impervious to such an intrusion." (8)

Since then, however, computers have begun to invade higher education in a massive way. Apart from their utilisation both as a scientific and an administrative tool, they have also been increasingly applied as an instructional medium. Four broad categories of uses for this function can be distinguished, viz. for drill and practice, for educational computer games and for simulation (9).

The use of the computer for drill exercises, to present problems and check answers, is probably the most common function at present. Most drill and practice programmes constitute "automated workbooks" guiding the student through segments of a specific subject and tutoring lines by asking questions, approving correct answers and going back over material not mastered. Computer games, on the other hand, either convey some information about a specific subject or attempt to sharpen cognitive skills of the learner that are applicable to a variety of subject matters. Thus, an educational computer game can help the student to analyse a problem and to resolve it, or to arrive at a rational decision after having analysed the options available. Increasingly, the computer is being used for simulations, in particular in conjunction with other, mostly visual, media. When applied to this purpose, it can either represent simplified models of larger and more complex systems or can demonstrate situations that are too costly, dangerous or difficult to observe or act upon directly. For example, simulation might permit students to explore the inner workings (and causes of a malfunctioning) of a rocket, help them recognise the symptoms of rare or highly contagious diseases, undertake dangerous and costly chemical experiments, or train for aircraft take-off and landing in a flight simulator.

What distinguishes computers from other media such as audio and video technologies is that it is not only a medium and a tool but it has the potential of being used as a tool maker, in other words the creator of new programmes and applications. Thus, where other technologies are media or tools for the purpose of directed instruction (even though at the individual pace of the student) the computer can be utilised for open education, that is for (relatively) free, individual exploration, directed by his/her curiosity, inhibitions or needs. So, while computers lend themselves readily to the purpose of directed instruction, they can also be used for more creative, intuitive and self-controlled learning (10).

The limits in the application of computer-assisted learning encountered thus far are due to the persistence of a certain time lag in the development of software appropriate for instruction purposes. Colleges and universities have made great strides in providing efficient access to computer hardware, both in the form of micro-computers and multiple main-frame terminals. As mentioned, co-operative agreements between industry and higher education institutions have served to make computers available to students at campuses all over North America. Nevertheless, both industry and educators have trailed behind in the provision of software which is i) flexible enough to adapt to a wide range of learners; ii) transferable from one type of hardware to another; and iii) designed to cover a full range of post-secondary curricula.

So far, computers as a learning tool are used primarily for on-campus instruction and not oriented to off-campus students. This may change as educational programmes continue to integrate inter-active technologies such as computers or audio teleconferencing and electronic mail into delivery systems that in the past relied mainly on non-interactive technology such as one-way TV or radio broadcast. However, whether or not computer-based instruction and learning will become a more central feature of distance learning will depend to a large extent upon the development of courseware suited to adult learning needs.

## 3. ISSUES STILL OPEN

It will have been apparent from our observations above that many matters relating to the applicabilities of the new technologies to higher education and their specific potential for the various groups of adult students are still far from clear. The field requires, and would lend itself, to additional and deeper investigation has been possible in the present enquiry. The issues left outstanding for resolution seem principally to be the following.

New sophisticated technologies can indeed bridge the barriers of time and distance, that have been most powerful in keeping adult students from entering higher education. Nevertheless, the same technologies may be erecting new obstacles that may be just as powerful.

One of these is the high cost of advanced equipment which may put such technologies out of the reach of would-be students from lower-income groups. With educational institutions relying increasingly on more costly technologies, those who can afford home computers, multiple cable television services, video cassette recorders and the like will have access to a much wider choice of educational options than those who cannot afford any, or all, of them. This raises the issue of equity and concerns have been voiced that we run the risk of creating not only a society of information "haves and have nots", but also of education "haves and have-nots" (11).

The equity issue may cut across different lines when applied to the case of distance learning. As evidence on the characteristics of students enrolled in distance education suggests, it is a particular group of learners that benefit most from this mode of teaching and learning: hard-working, highly motivated, self-disciplined, high achiever. By contrast, the creative, spontaneous and social person who learns through discussions with teachers and peers, through trial and error, or through concrete experience rather than by himself and in an abstract and systematic way, tends to be served less well by distance education or other modes requiring self-directed learning.

These two learner profiles may be stereotypes but statistics on student success in distance learning indeed support the thesis that distance education is directed toward Martha, the practical-minded, task-oriented, determined and energetic sister of the biblical story, but closed to Mary, the sister who sat at Jesus' feet listening to his words while her sister was busy with her duties in the home (12).

Distance education, with its emphasis on individual learning and independent study, in fact the very nature of its teaching materials and delivery methods, which rely increasingly on "impersonal", technological media all tend to favour the Martha-type student, who is an efficient, motivated learner but often essentially passive in his or her determination to absorb and master a pre-packaged course content or programme. But not so for Mary, the student who seeks to develop knowledge through and interaction, drawing on her own experience and interests rather than through solitary study of isolated materials? Is it "really any surprise that she, who is looking for an academic education that can emerge from her own culture and situation, either will not enter, or if she does, will have to adopt another form of communication or leave the system, or simply, as statistics seem to show, will do relatively badly?" (13).

But how can distance education adapt to serve both Mary and Martha? Though we cannot attempt to offer solutions here some may lie in the area of supplementary technology-based delivery systems to provide more social contacts in adapting teaching and learning materials to allow for more personal approaches, and in using technology to strengthen the potential for going beyond mere transmission of knowledge to real two-way communication.

The risks to equity have been addressed above, generated by the development and use of higher technology in adult education, but new technologies also have a great (greater) role to play in assuring more equitable solutions and options for adult learners who are under-served by traditional educational institutions and methods. Technology has the potential to reach out beyond the usual clients of adult education, already well-educated and highly motivated, to other groups, such as those in need of acquiring or renewing basic skills and the varied groups of "special learners" which include minority language groups, homebound and handicapped persons and older adults (14). A choice will need to be made in the near future between technologies with a capacity to reach narrowly defined segments of the population (e.g. narrowcast cable television) and the more familiar technologies like open broadcast television that reach large, undifferentiated audiences. The result of such choices will have a major effect on the availability of learning opportunities for special populations in the future (15).

The question of academic quality in the application of telecommunication technology to education has also been a major issue for educators, particularly in the academic mainstream. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that with the development of educational software in a wide variety of fields capable of more fully utilising the capacity of the computer, these hesitations will diminish. The need is for faculty from all areas of the curriculum to become involved and active not only in the development of new software but also in the pursuit of a more flexible incorporation and integration of existing audio and video technologies and materials.

Adult and distance education would certainly benefit in general from a greater qualitative exploitation of telecommunication technology in education. Nevertheless, where distance education stands to derive the most benefit at this point is in the area of increased access to library and print resources for learners remote from campus or regional centres. With the lack of ready access to such materials necessary to complete assignments in many graduate and under-graduate courses, a major hinderance to quality distance learning, technological developments have gone and continue to go forward towards resolving this problem.

As said at the outset, these observations make no pretence of providing final analyses or solutions. They will have fulfilled their purpose, however, if they have made the case for certain areas in particular needing further research and discussion.

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11. Lewis, op. cit., p. 63.

12. G. van Enckevort, "Distance Education for Adult Students: Old and New Barriers for Participation", in G. van Enckevort/K. Harry/P. Morin/ H.G. Schütze (eds.), Distance Higher Education and the Adult Learner, Assen (Dutch Open University), 1986.

13. Ibidem, p. 5.

14. By their very way of teaching at a distance, distance universities are especially equipped for catering for students with physical disabilities. In addition, some of them make special provision for disabled students such as special courses or examinations for visually handicapped and hearing-impaired students. Thus, handicapped students comprise 2.6 per cent of the OU-UK's student population in 1984, and 2 per cent of the German Distance University, respectively.

15. Lewis, op. cit., p. 63.

## Chapter V

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The following main conclusions arise from this project of enquiry.

1. Despite a long tradition of extra-mural provision in some countries, adults in higher education are a relatively new group. Although they are still marginal in numbers, their importance is growing. Unlike other "new groups" such as ethnic minorities, or the disadvantaged, adults constitute a thoroughly heterogeneous group representing a wide variety of social and educational backgrounds, and differing widely with respect to their study objectives.

2. Higher education is traditionally characterised by classroom teaching, full-time attendance and a student body consisting of young people aged between 18 and 25 years with the proper academic qualifications. This traditional pattern is undergoing gradual, yet radical, change in most Member countries. Thus, while classroom teaching, full-time courses and students of the traditional age group are still dominant, off-campus provision and independent learning, part-time study and adult students are clearly and steadily on the increase.

3. There are several factors behind the increase in adult participation in higher education. Most important is probably the recurrent need to refresh and enlarge work-related skills and knowledge, a need made mandatory by accelerated technological and social change. Other factors of a socio-economic nature include increased opportunities, and frequently the need for career changes in mid-life, increased non-work time due to shorter working hours, longer periods of retirement and greater periods of leisure enforced upon the individual by unemployment, and the higher levels of initial education which are conducive to continuing interest in education.

   Perhaps the most influential element behind the increase in adult demand for higher education (and for education generally) goes beyond such factors to a concern with larger quality of life issues. Increasingly, there is both a general recognition of an individual right to personal growth and development which is partly achieved through education, and the accompanying realisation that education is not a process which is confined to a person's youth, but is, like personal growth and development, a life-time affair.

4. In line with these different reasons behind adult participation in higher education, four categories of adult students can be discerned:

   a) Those who enter or re-enter higher education as adults in order to pursue mainstream studies leading to a full first degree or diploma ("delayers", "deferrers", or those who are admitted on credentials for work experience or second-chance educational routes);

   b) Those who re-enter to up-date their professional knowledge, or seek to acquire additional qualifications, in order to change occupation or advance in their career ("refreshers", "recyclers");

   c) Those without previous experience in higher education who enrol for professional purposes especially in courses of short duration, though the boundaries between the "professional" and "general" may often not be very clear (e.g. in languages or computer sciences);

   d) Those, with or without previous experience in higher education, who enrol for courses with the explicit purpose of personal fulfilment.

5. Adults face a number of specific obstacles that often prevent them from participating in higher education. These are particularly important in the case of degree studies. Most of the obstacles have to do with the students' life situation (work and family obligations) as well as with the fact that generally speaking, higher education institutions have not yet adapted their entry requirements curricula, schedules, modes of delivery or support services to the needs of this new clientele. These difficulties can not be addressed on the level of individual institutions since in many countries questions such as access requirements, modes of study and student aid are regulated by law.

6. Organisational policies and practices thus play an eminent role in that they can put up or, conversely, eliminate or lower previous barriers to adult participation in degree studies. Open admission or recognition of work or life experience as an equivalent to academic entry qualifications represent an example of removing barriers for adults. Of even greater importance is the availability of part-time modes of study which permit the adult student to combine study and work. Other examples of innovative organisational options that facilitate adult participation include distance study, credit transfer, modular courses and the availability of suitable information and counselling facilities.

7. While finance is an important factor for higher education students of all ages, it plays a particularly crucial role for adults who must find means of meeting not only the costs of study and their own maintenance but also that of their families. Three general patterns for student aid to adults can be distinguished:

-- Specific support schemes for adult students that take account of, and make special provision for, the particular socio-economic situation of adults;

-- Student support schemes that are "neutral" in the sense that they apply equally to traditional age and adult students without making any special allowance for specific needs of older students;

-- Student aid schemes that discriminate against adult students in a variety of ways ranging from upper age ceilings for study support, to the non-eligibility of part-time studies for financial aid.

While the first category must be considered the rare exception, most types of financial support fall under the latter two. Evidence suggests that, on the whole, student support for which adults are eligible is neither sufficient, given the specific needs of adults, nor suited to the specific mode by which most adults tend to participate in degree programmes. This applies in particular to the non-eligibility of distance and part-time studies in most countries.

8. Participation by adults in degree programmes varies significantly from country to country depending to a large extent on the existence of flexible organisational policies and practices, such as open admission rules, and part-time provision, alluded to above. Thus, adult participation is higher in Sweden (more than 50 per cent) and the United States, in the former case because of explicit policies, in the latter due to a very flexible market-oriented approach of higher education. Participation is low (under 10 per cent) in countries such as France, Germany, Austria and Japan, whose higher education systems are highly structured and relatively inflexible.

9. Although, as mentioned before, adults are a highly diversified group, there are some dominant characteristics of adult students enrolled in degree programmes. In all the countries surveyed, the adult student is relatively young, i.e. the large majority is between 25 (the minimum age fixed for the purpose of defining adult students in this study) and 35 years. While in Canada, the United States, Sweden and Finland women represent the majority among adults students, in the other countries women are somewhat under-represented although their share is increasing. As to their educational background, the majority of adult students possess a higher level of initial education than the adult population generally. Also, as is true for traditional age students in higher education, students with working class backgrounds are under-represented in adult education in relation to the total population, although to a lesser degree than their younger counterparts.

As may be expected, the large majority of adult students are in some form of paid employment and are married, many of them with children. Altogether, then, while the majority of adult students do not differ significantly from traditional age students with respect to their class or educational background, they naturally do so in terms of their life situation where they share a series of basic characteristics with their non-participating peers, for instance, regarding employment, marriage, children and the like.

10. The increase of adult participation occurs to a lesser extent only in degree studies, while the great bulk of adults can be found in continuing education, i.e. shorter non-degree courses. While some countries have a long-standing tradition of extra-mural provision, in others universities were not engaged in continuing education, leaving the task to the non-academic adult education sector. However, in all countries, policies, both on the governmental and institutional level, have been developed recently to promote continuing education through higher education.

11. While, in the past, the emphasis of university provided continuing education was on the liberal arts, professional continuing education emerges as a field of particular viability and importance. At bottom, this stems from the recognition (seen as one of the principal reasons for adult participation in higher education generally) that the turnover of science and technology has become so rapid that universities and kindred institutions can no longer claim to provide their graduates with the skills and knowledge sufficient for their whole professional life. Formerly, professional associations or other institutions outside higher education provided the bulk of professional refreshing or up-dating courses; nowadays, increasingly higher education institutions are assuming the task of maintaining the competence of their former graduates through recurrent up-dating courses.

12. Judging from recent developments in policies and practices, professional continuing education (indeed, continuing education generally) is no longer considered a marginal activity of higher education. Rather, policy-makers and institutions alike tend to regard it increasingly as a central mission, equal in significance to the two other principal missions of universities, namely research and the teaching of undergraduate students.

13. In the past, time and distance have been major obstacles to the participation of adult students. While study by correspondence, or broadcast, were designed to overcome these obstacles, the significance of distance education remained marginal. The development of new telecommunication and information media which permit interactive modes of communication between teacher and learner are bringing about what many experts see as a turning point in the role of distance teaching and learning. However, to realise the full potential of the new technologies, a number of problems need to be resolved first, in particular the development of suitable courseware.

14. For many adults, the new technologies, while removing some of the barriers to participation, might erect new ones that are equally difficult to overcome. One of these is the cost of the more sophisticated information and telecommunication equipment (e.g. multiple cable television services, video cassette recorders, video

disc playback machines or home computers) costs which may put such technology, and hence education, out of the reach of adult would-be-students from low-income backgrounds.

15. The participation of adults in higher education in increasing numbers, their gradual integration into the institutions' mainstream provision, and the growing recognition of continuing education as a genuine mission of higher education, of equal importance and status to research and initial education, are at the basis of many innovations concerning higher education as a whole, and of the further development and fuller utilisation of new educational technologies.

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***The numbers of adults enrolling as students in universities and other centres of higher education in OECD countries have grown so large they may now be considered a distinct group recognized by policy-makers. This report reviews a number of programmes that certain OECD countries have developed to satisfy their requirements.***

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